"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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THE POETRY REVIEW

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THE QUEST FOR BEAUTY

THERE are some words which are so pregnant with meaning that they cannot be defined, or where, if we make the attempt, the definition must of necessity be partial or inadequate. Liberty, Truth, Justice, are words of this kind, words which represent great abstractions, mental or spiritual conceptions which are common to mankind, values which, although like life itself ultimately indefinable, must be constantly reaffirmed, reassessed and reinterpreted in order that we may understand and appreciate something of their reality and significance. Now an abstraction is not something unreal, it is something real but intangible, something we cannot see or touch, something without observable form, but which we know exists. Liberty, Truth, Justice, as general conceptions, are abstractions, mental conceptions, ideas in the mind, but, like all abstractions, to be serviceable to man they must be translated into concrete terms. Liberty in the abstract must be applied to observable things and facts, to persons, to concrete situations, to work, to leisure, to society, in order that its nature may be demonstrated. What I wish to emphasize is that an abstraction, a mental conception, is a reality in itself, but it is only *provable,* it can only be demonstrated, by being given concrete form ; the spirit can only be made manifest by taking flesh.

Now Beauty is a spirit, a living abstraction, something that is real, that is inescapable, but what is it ? We can, I think, only arrive at an answer to that question by a general consideration of its nature and form.

Beauty is, in a sense, its own justification. These words by Robert Bridges perhaps express that as well as it can be expressed :

> Some perfected flower, iris or lily, is born,
> patterning heavenly beauty, a pictured idea
> that hath no other expression for us, nor could have
> for that which lily or iris tell cannot be told
> by poetry or by music in their secret tongues,
> nor is discerptible in logic, but is itself
> an absolute piece of being.

But although a thing of beauty is "an absolute piece of being" and not "discerptible in logic," there are, I think, certain attributes which are common to all beautiful things ; shall we say, serenity, sincerity, harmony and dignity. You will probably agree with that list, although you might elaborate and extend it. So much, then, briefly, for the qualities of beauty. What of its form ? How can it be manifested to the senses ? By shape, colour, sound and movement. The shape of a vase, the colour of a rose, the sound of an organ, the movements of a dance, all these may give form and body to the spirit of beauty.

But these things—shape, colour, sound, movement—do not constitute beauty in themselves. In themselves they may be ugly, they may jar our sensibilities. They are only beautiful if they are presented to the mind in

a certain order, in certain harmonious combinations, in a certain pattern. A lovely piece of music is not merely a sound, it is an orderly arrangement of sounds, a certain combination of notes which makes an appeal to our aesthetic sense. A good picture is not merely shape and colour, it is an orderly arrangement of shapes and colours, a matter of balance, of pattern of tonal relations and gradations. A dance is not just movement, it is rhythmic movement, a pattern in movement. Order, pattern, rhythm, harmony, these are essential to beauty. It is the antithesis of chaos, it is a presentation to the senses of a divine order. Fundamentally, beauty is sanity, ugliness insanity; beauty is health, ugliness disease; "beauty is truth, truth beauty."

To-day the world is at war and war spells chaos and destruction, ugliness and disease. War is, and must be, beauty's foe, an attack on those very qualities which are integral to all lovely things—order, sincerity, serenity, dignity, harmony. It is therefore imperative that we should remember, in the words of Robert Bridges, that:

> Beauty is the prime motive of all man's excellence,
> His aim and peaceful purpose.

and that we should strive to keep alive in our own minds and in the hearts and minds of men a knowledge and love of beautiful things. And they can be kept alive, as they have been kept alive, in the very welter and desolation of destruction. There always have been, there always will be, minds that will be devoted to the contemplation and pursuit of beauty even while mankind is directing its energies in the main to hatred, ugliness and ruin. Robert Bridges, in his "Testament of Beauty," speaks of this imperishable urge to beauty, of this endless quest for the loveliness at the heart of things:

> See then how deeply seated is the urgence thereto.
> Bach and Mozart obeyed or those other minstrels
> Who pioneered for us on the marches of heaven
> And paid no heed to wars that swept the world around,
> Nor in their homes were more troubled by canon roar
> Than late the small birds were, that nested and carolled
> Upon the devastated battlefields of France.

It is perhaps more difficult in our own day and generation to pay no heed to wars that sweep the world around, for they invade our lives with an even more ruthless insistence than in the days of Bach and Mozart, but where ugliness is the aggressor, it is more than ever essential that we should defend the realm of beauty with all the forces at our command. For if it be true, as I think it is, that "the mind is indissociable from what it contemplates," the contemplation of beautiful things is not a luxury, but a necessity, if we are to make a world fit for human beings to live in.

Beauty is not the monopoly of any nation, its gifts are universal. The

works of Rembrandt are strong enough to pass any frontier, the plays of Shakespeare cannot be imprisoned in a concentration camp. Even though they were destroyed, their influence, often an unconscious influence, has so entered into the minds of men that it cannot wholly perish. The effect of beauty on the minds of men is incalculable, because we have no measure by which to assess it. Yet we are all in some degree worshippers at her shrine; beauty is not confined to man's works of art, for do they not owe their inspiration and creation to the world of natural beauty that lies about us, a world that we all share and that, to a greater or lesser extent, we all appreciate? A man I know once told me that he had no eye for beauty, but admitted that he grew flowers in his garden.

What then has beauty to offer to mankind that through the ages men and women have devoted themselves to her service, creating forms in which to express her manifold loveliness or feeling their hearts respond to her natural manifestations? Her sights and sounds, her colours and movements, are they no more than sights and sounds, colours and movements patterned to an orderly synthesis? Are they not rather the outward and visible expression of a divine spirit of beauty at the heart of creation, something to which the human spirit responds, which it acknowledges as real, as right and true.

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all
> We know, and all we need on earth to know.
>
> Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely,
> whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things.

Truth and Beauty are so often associated in the mind, for who can separate them one from another? We feel instinctively that beauty is good, that beauty is true, that beauty is right, as we feel that ugliness is evil, that ugliness is false, that ugliness is wrong. Of a man who thinks no evil we say "He has a lovely mind," recognising that beauty can be expressed in conduct, in the life of a man. For what is the life of Christ but a poem that through the generations has spoken to the hearts of men, troubling their dark spirits with its beauty as the angel troubled the waters of the pool they called Bethesda, bringing strength and healing to their distress as those waters healed men's bodily infirmities, giving to man a vision of perfection, of truth and beauty, that haunts him, that disturbs him, that pursues him with all the relentless persistence of the hound of heaven.

I think it was Galsworthy who said that until men learned to love beauty there could be no peace. The world to-day is an ugly place: men kill and are killed, the great bombers drone across the sky with their load of death, the guns roar and men cower in the earth, towns are shattered, ships are sent to the bottom of the sea, hatred and fear possess the hearts and minds of men. But in the woods and the fields and the hedgerows

Beauty still walks abroad, bringing her message of peace; when shall we learn to listen to her voice? W. R. LATHAM.

CLARE

THE great, grey, centuried church struck seven,
Sunbathing in the light of that clear season
When children brown-limbed come to their school year,
When youth gets into khaki for world war,
And swallows' flight says to the heart *departure*.

By the low wall an apple's dab of red
Peered out. Dark-green as bottle or glass bead,
The broad, smooth, columned yew-trees, threaded
With their multitude of blood-prick berries,
Watched by the leaning grave-stones by the street.

The long, wide, quiet street was empty except
For myself in the waiting car and one small schoolgirl
Who propped her bicycle and called up: "Mother!"
And soon, rode off. The ghost hidden in me drew,
Suddenly, a long breath. I hardly knew
If it was hope it breathed or hope remembered.

N. K. CRUICKSHANK.

HEARTBREAK

(To G. W.)

FAREWELL.
My lips can hardly shape the word.
My throat is tight and dry and hard with grief;
The loveliness that was my knowing you
So sweet a thing, so brief.
Soon you'll be gone, breasting the swelling wave
Swimming with strong and lusty strokes
Out of my ken
You, who put windows in my soul
Who brought, in winter, summer's halcyon peace,
Who shewed me long forgotten, far off things,
Who gave my thoughts release.
Farewell,
That means good-bye.
Farewell, farewell.

CELIA E. BANGHAM.

TENNYSON: FIFTY YEARS AFTER

ON October 6th, 1892, Tennyson died at Aldworth. They drew the curtains of his room and allowed the full moon to stream upon the great gaunt corpse; they placed *Cymbeline* in his hand and upon his chest they laid a wreath of laurel from Virgil's tomb. Two days later the coffin was taken to Westminster Abbey. The nave was lined with veterans from the charge of Balaclava. He was accompanied to Poet's Corner by the great men of his age. In the streets outside the newsboys were hawking copies of the "Crossing of the Bar" printed with a huge black border. And in countless English homes it was felt that the greatest poet of his age, perhaps the greatest of all English poets, had passed away.

It is interesting, after the lapse of fifty years, to consider the fluctuations of Tennyson's reputation. By people of my father's generation he was regarded as the majestic laureate of the Victorian age, as the author of *Locksley Hall* and the *Idylls of the King,* as an epic poet of almost Virgilian proportions who had never written an epic. The reaction was inevitable and had been foreseen by Tennyson himself. "I am up now," he remarked, "but I shall be down, down." It was, in fact, the fashion among the intellectuals of my generation to leave Tennyson unread, even as it is to-day the fashion to regard Swinburne as a gay deception. But Tennyson assuredly was no deception. He was a great poet, who, at a certain stage of his career was admired by the wrong people for the wrong reasons, and who was unfortunate in the age in which he lived. The essential Tennyson was a mystic who, had he been born in the seventeenth century, would have become a metaphysician. His genius was not wholly attuned to the optimistic certitudes of the nineteenth century. It was a misfortune that a man who was by nature created to sing of doubt and foreboding, should by circumstances have been forced to celebrate prosperity and self-satisfaction. We are alienated to-day by the complacency of Tennyson's verse. Yet if we regard that complacency as a regrettable incident, if we force ourselves to approach Tennyson, not as the bard of Victorian materialism, but as a lyric poet of deeply troubled vision, then we can clear away many of the prejudices by which his reputation is encumbered, and recognize him clearly as the tremendous lyric poet that he was.

It may seem unfortunate that Tennyson should have proved so subservient to his age. Few men, few poets even, have been so morbidly sensitive to criticism, and, however much we may regret it, we cannot hope to understand Tennyson unless we realise that he was at moments driven by contemporary criticism to express himself in unauthentic ways. It thus comes that, to modern minds, there is a vast difference between the poetry which he wrote for himself and the poetry which he wrote in deference to contemporary taste or criticism. I do not deny that the *Idylls,* whether of the Arthurian or the domestic variety, are amazingly competent

works of art, or that they contain passages of pure poetry. But I contend that their inspiration and their formulas are so alien to modern conceptions that they appear to us to be lacking in sincerity. The essential, the immortal Tennyson, is not however to be sought for in them.

It is useful and interesting, in studying any major poet, to take some account of the nature of contemporary criticism, as of the effect which such criticism exercised upon his work. I had the good fortune once to find in the Charing Cross Road an old album in which some Victorian scholar had pasted all the major criticisms of Tennyson's poetry from the year 1832 to the year 1889. This album proved a revelation to me. Until then I had always assumed that, after an initial period of misunderstanding, Tennyson became accepted as the unquestioned laureate of his age, and that from then onwards he had been greeted by one unceasing paean of adulation. This is not the fact. Throughout his long poetic career he was tortured by criticism, not merely of his style and prosody, but of his intellectual sincerity. He suffered much from these attacks, brooding over them in the dark and bitter recesses of his soul, grumbling complaints and self-justification to all whom he met. I remember Edmund Gosse telling me once, how, at luncheon at Aldworth, the Laureate had suddenly asked him whether he had read a review of *Demeter,* by Churton Collins. Gosse stammered that he was afraid he had. "Collins," thundered Tennyson, "is a louse upon the locks of literature."

We are obliged therefore to accept the fact that Tennyson during his lifetime was exposed to much contemporary criticism ; that he was deeply and agonizingly affected by such criticism ; and that, in his middle period at least, he was deterred by sensitiveness to attack from giving full expression to his own lyricism and tempted to write poetry which he knew would please contemporary taste. If that be a true contention (and I think it is) then it is interesting to consider what was the nature of the early criticism which so influenced the style and content of his later poems.

When one reads the reviews of the 1832 volume and the 1842 volume one is startled to discover that Tennyson is assailed for faults which are wholly different from those which we generally associated with his later work. The epithets which most frequently occur in the reviews of his earlier poems are "effeminate," "morbid," affected" and "silly." He is blamed for "an absence of refinement and a failure of dignity and decorum." He is blamed for "inaccuracy and imprecision." In a review of 1849, these faults are attributed to the "bad school of taste, under the influence of which, Mr. Tennyson commenced his poetic authorship .... To this source we trace the affectations of many kinds which deface his writings, affectation of a super-refinement of meaning, ending in mere obscurity or in sheer nonsense ; affectation of antique simplicity ending

in the most jejune triviality; experimental metres putting the ear to torture; or an utter disregard of all metre, of all the harmonies of verse, together with an incessant toil after originality of phrase." To these criticisms of affectation, or insincerity, to these accusations of "degeneracy" and "morbidity" are added complaints of his "intolerable vagueness." Even *In Memoriam* is attacked not only for its "atheism," but for conveying "no impression of reality or truthfulness to the mind."

Such criticisms, when we read them with *Ulysses* or *Tithonus* in our minds, seem to us inconceivable. To our ears the poetry of Tennyson is so limpid and obvious that we cannot understand how his contemporaries can ever have thought him morbid or obscure. Yet in fact there was much truth, and Tennyson knew there was much truth, in what these critics said. The poems of the Somersby period are certainly effeminate, and "O darling room" assuredly justified Bulwer's gibe about "school-miss Alfred." Such poems as "The Two Voices" are certainly morbid, nor could anyone deny that "Maud" is obscure. Yet it seems irritating to us that serious critics should have been blind to the intense lyrical quality of the early poems, or that a man of Lockhart's intelligence could have written to Croker of the 1832 volume, "It is wonderful that such folly should pass for poetry with anybody." It is even more irritating that Tennyson should have been edged away by such criticism from the morbid despondency which was the central core of his genius. What a magnificent poem "In Memoriam" would have been had Tennyson dared to throw into it the unreserved agony of his loneliness and gloom!

The reaction against the Victorian age has now spent itself and we are able to estimate the faults and virtues of that great epoch with less prejudiced eyes. The contemporary distrust of any poet who worked "without a conscience or an aim" was inimical to pure poetry, and introduced a taste for didactic poetry to which Tennyson succumbed unduly. Had he been possessed of greater moral courage he would have written more deeply and more searchingly upon the conflict between religion and science, which was not merely one of his own most constant preoccupations, but the central spiritual problem of his age. Yet Tennyson, in spite of his rugged manners and appearance, was one of nature's appeasers, and like all appeasers he hampered his own intelligence by a love of compromise. Magnificent though "In Memoriam" is, it would have been more magnificent had Tennyson allowed himself to express more deeply and more outrightly, the spiritual and religious doubts by which he was assailed. Throughout that great poem, he is so desirous to leave his "sister while she prays" that he provides his brothers with little inner transparency of thought. It is a lovely melody which circles round and round an unexpressed theme.

I have always advised people of the younger generation to approach Tennyson through his occasional verse. I advise them to read "The Daisy." I advise them to read the lines to Catullus. I advise them to read his dedicatory poems, or the urbane Horatian lines to F. D. Maurice, or the charming verses with which he sent *Tiresias* to Fitzgerald :

> "' which you will take,
> My Fitz, and welcome, as I know,
> Less for its own than for the sake,
> Of one recalling gracious times,
> When in our younger London days,
> You found some merit in my rhymes,
> And I more pleasure in your praise."

I then advise them to consider the actual purity of Tennyson's verse, his use of vowels, his amazing skill in the handling of alliterations, his use of onomatopoeia. These may, it is true, be mere literary devices, but few writers of English poetry have used them so well. And the modern mind does, I find, obtain pleasure from the technique of poetry, which to them is more satisfying than it was to us. They like the lilt.

But above all I ask the younger generation to consider this question of pure poetry. There is much in Tennyson's great work which is not pure poetry at all, but poetry applied to certain tastes and conventions which we regard as uninteresting and a trifle false. But there is also in Tennyson an amount of pure poetry which has nothing whatever to do either with his age or with the rather self-conscious attitude which he adopted towards his own poetic mission. There are, for instance, many passages in "In Memoriam" which rise above the level of mere technical skill. The famous alliterative sequence beginning "The Danube to the Severn gave" may seem too "literary" for so moving a theme ; I admit that the artifice of the passage is so deliberate as to become emphatic ; but I do not see how any man of judgment can read these lines without feeling that something more than metrical aptitude is involved. I tell the young to read, with minds swept clear of past associations or prejudices, the songs from *Maud* or the *Princess*. I ask them to read *Ulysses*, the *Lotus Eaters* and *Tithonus*. I ask them to consider whether a line such as "Now lies the earth all Danäe to the stars" is not a very great line of poetry. I ask them to consider whether the last lines of *Ulysses* or *Tithonus* can really be intelligently dismissed as "Victorian" ; I ask them to read *Demeter and Persephone*. Such poetry, fifty years after, is fresh and strong. I look forward with confidence to a Tennysonian revival.

HAROLD NICOLSON.

[We regret that war-time conditions prevented this authoritative article being included in the September-October issue of THE POETRY REVIEW.—Ed.]

IF I FORGET THEE O JERUSALEM . . . .

IF words were rocks and measured lines
Were ranges' bulky undulation,
Were imagery orange pines,
Or waterfalls' gestation,
Or moors, or wet and dazzling meads,
Or hallow woods or pounding seas,
Or still mysterious pools with reeds
Engrilled and gloomed with trees,
Some part of England build I must,
In place of this anaemic dust.

For now the hunger gnaws, the eyes
Are hungry, very flesh is starved
Of sensuous nourishment and cries
For wealth of colour, body carved
And multiformed by natural might,
But rich as stained cathedral glass,
With clarifying showers bright
And glazed green in gleaming mass.
Upholster me that naked mound :
Let turf luxuriant abound.

And unctuous black, decisive sting
Embolders trees and shoulders rocks,
Whose barred strength's now countering
The sun's influx, now sculpting box
Of house, or bridge, or gaunt faced mill,
Thy depth I yearn in evening's light,
For silhouette of moor and hill,
The deep bass key and certain bite,
Thou womb of purple's deepest hue,
Unfathomed mine of red and blue.

For think not England's now become
A paradise, an island ringed
With vapour, floating even as some
Ethereal dream, that's lightly winged
To top right hand the cranium,
With rosy buttocked cherubs, each,
From misty edged proscenium
Outpuffing winds would nurse a peach.
When Aden's fangs are daily wet
Shall sense grow vague and feet forget.

Acute the groin of wooded hills
Where deep resounding Ewden swarms
Its boulders, gluts its banks, and mills
The pebbled bed succeeding storms,
Near rhododendrons, full blown heads
Are narrow falls as bell ropes steep,
Whilst right across the torrent spreads
The fresh translucent tissued beech.
With corners more obscure I league
That commonly uncommon, intrigue.

Is seen a child, when someone ducks
Behind a chair, then out a while,
How spite of pouting mouth it plucks
A pleasant mood and pricks a smile :
How spite of adults' irksome tricks,
Infatuation o'er the cot,
Some sense is stirred, the pattern quicks—
The eyes ? the pulse ? the soul ? God wot !
So fresh the view at every rise .
That self was wonder, sweet surprise.

Upon the windy Pennines piled
Are tumuli of quarried stone,
Now dark with years exposed and wild,
Command the bleakest ridge alone ;
But there in desolation's core
Are sixty steps beneath the ground,
Each step is colder, greener, more
Than dank, till icy water's found ;
And sheer the heights, a solid block,
Enclose that crevice hewn in rock.

In mind extensive views transport ;
But plunge me midst, give body food
Ere spirit soar. Foundations wrought
In breathe the breath of certain mood :
Let air be song or sun or showers,
With humid perfumes drench the trees,
Uptoss a cloud and squander flowers,
Unleash a tempest, coax a breeze :
That mood would give the soul new birth
That hovered over English earth.

Trooper, Queen's Bays. C. HELLIWELL.

TWO POEMS BY LT. WILLIAM ROSE OF H.M.S. "COSSACK"

I.

NO one can go the way I go
No one can know the things I know
No human heart or mind go with me where I go.
Only one person goes the way I go
Only one Heart can know
All that my heart must learn of joy and woe.
Yet, dearest human love, we meet, the meeting sweet
We kiss and feel the bliss of loving.
Though we live the highest human bliss and know
Our hearts are knit in this, we cannot go
Life's whole way with each other.
Only we go so far that distant star
Is over-past. Then at the very last
Heart's glow, alone we go
Companioned only by that One who shows the ways to go
To reach supremest Love, linking us so.

II.

LINES WRITTEN ON CHRISTMAS DAY

THEY say that Spring comes only once
To the imperial forest;
That our faint murmuring is not Spring
But the catastrophe of falling leaves
According to the law of Autumn.
Is there nothing more
Than gross dominion to be gained
In youth, fended in prime,
And yielded in the staggering of age?

What brave philosophy is this!
Take down the sword
And slash the many coloured mantle
Of the world, till all is red
With blood and foul with money;
Crush the emergent flower
Within a book of noble principles,
Grow fat with memory,
Then sleep—is this the truth?

Hear then the tale of the familiar feast:
The child who came, did flower, and died
And yet prevailed upon the tragedy of time.
Seek here some new imperial purpose, or have done;
For history becomes a weary circle,
Destiny a dream. Inspire
A vision that transcends the murmuring
Of our bewildered priests,
Or Christ and all our sons
Have died in vain.

WILLIAM ROSE.

EMBARKATION LEAVE

SWIFT as a swallow's dipping
Sharp as a sword's thin blade
I count the moments slipping
And know my heart afraid.

Strength would I have for speeding
Joy where no tears have part,
The peace the world is needing
To bear within his heart.

Larks to the sky soar singing,
Bees to the sun-drenched flower,
Shall not my soul go speeding
Back to God's strength and power?

Then to my son's last blessing
Out of a faith re-born,
Strength, as of hills, possessing
Peace, as of woods at dawn.

Vancouver. VIOLET A. HOBSON.

SLEEP

I AM afraid of Sleep.
Into it creep
A jumbled heap
Of the day's reapings,
Weepings,
Gnashing teeth,
And underneath,
A cross
Of infinite loss.

DOROTHY BIRCH.

THREE POEMS BY H. W. HARDING

AUTUMN DAWN, TWICKENHAM

LONG shadows bar the dew drenched lawn
Like ghostly worshippers of dawn
Abased before the risen sun
To make their morning orison.

Stars drown in light as to the sky
Dawn lifts his golden monstrance high,
While incense drifts, a soft blue mist,
To grace that pagan eucharist.

Tall sunflowers hang vice-regal heads
Before the lord of flower beds
And like a votive candle glows,
With ecstasy, a sunlit rose.

Graven in foliate stone, the trees
Flirt with no sacrilegious breeze,
But stand, twice lovely, uncaressed,
Limned on the sky and river's breast.

Now goes that celebrant of night,
Of moon's mad magic, neophyte,
A cat on raffish sleep intent,
To sacred pomps indifferent
And, sudden, from the tranquil stream
A sea-gull's harsh and alien scream
Shatters the silence and the dream.

TO A LADY WORKING IN A LAWYER'S OFFICE

O PRISONED bird, self-immolated, caged,
O vestal, victim of an arid cult,
What do you here, so sweet, so tender aged,
Where all is dead or dustily adult ?
You, who can move as Atalanta swift,
With kirtle flying all about her limbs,
Whose candid brow and clear-cut beauty lift
My thought to where the city's tumult dims,
Know you no law more sweet for virgin dream,
No contract sealed with nought but scarlet lips
Nor witnessed save as mirrored in some stream
A fleeting moment while a swallow dips ?

Your eyes are meant for more than law reports,
Your ear for wooing not for argument,
Your dainty grace for rose-embowered courts
Where Cupid, blindfold, laughs at precedent.

LAMENT FOR A RED MAY TREE

ANCIENT he stood yet, every Spring,
Burned with an undiminished flame
And hung his red haws clustering
Like lamps when Autumn came.

Count him among the untimely dead
Who, strong as Samson still unshorn,
Died as his mane of rootlets, spread
Deep in the earth, were torn.

He has not fallen yet, but stands,
Ungarlanded with bloom or leaf,
Lifting bare arms with drooping hands
Of blackened twigs, in grief.

Two years ago to-day he died,
Ere any autumn leaves were strewn,
When the bombed Earth was riven wide
Beneath a sickle moon.

Yet once again his haws shone red,
His autumn panoply as brave ;
We knew not that his leaves were shed
As tears upon his grave.

But when the trees were green again
With new leaves softly whispering,
The black-bird piped his songs in vain
To him, unanswering.

H. W. HARDING.

ACCUSATION?

WHOM do you accuse, soldier,
Rigid and stark ?
You who have undergone
The ultimate translation.
The worm is innocent and the moon
Pitiless. Awake not.
Yours is the consummation.

A. McCLELLAND.

THREE POEMS BY JOHN KENNEDY

COALING

HER bow is to the east'ard,
Lying right for coaling;
And coal in clouds goes groaning
Down to hungry holds.

She's outward bound for Suez,
Built for ocean plying;
Content with coasters lying
Proud in equal berth.

From out the sleepy sidings
Lazy trucks are taken
And lifted up, are shaken
Day by dusty day.

In swirling clouds, dark drifting,
Blue-eyed, black men labour
To build with ancient timber
Tents of shining steel.

Then eventide and silence.
Ships no longer straining,
Each tip a giant plaything
Wearied of its play.

FAITH

WHEN my life's trick is over
I'll sleep upon the hill,
Where springtime buries winter
Beneath the daffodil.
And through all future summers
I'll sway and laugh and trill
And join the lark in climbing
To God's high window-sill.
I'll drink the rain of thunder,
I'll tumble with the rill.
I cannot dream of lying
For ever dead and still.

TO TOM COLLINS

(Boatman on a Derelict River)

STILL no ships for the river, Tom,
And the flow is full and plenty.
The tide has topped yon dolphin piles,
But the berths are empty—empty.

Full many tides she's overdue,
And many a berth to give her,
And eager eyes still looking down
The brimming, silent river.

Tell me, Tom, in the "Neptune" now
Do they talk of busier days;
Drinking ale to the lonesome ship
And the river's quiet ways.

And tell me Tom, what have you learned
From the brimming, silent river?
Undismayed by her tricks of tide
In patient waiting, ever.

What of the ships which used to come;
Tom, what of the "Kalev's" sister?
What of the "Jean" and "Marianne";
What does the river whisper?

There's rumour on the river, Tom.
There is talk of trade returning.
They say there's hope of quick repair,
And old-time berths for dredging.

No mast nor smoke is peeping, Tom.
And the distant reach is empty.
Then what of her—the faithful one?
She's come for years nigh twenty.

Go tell them in the "Neptune," Tom,
Go tell them the river is dead.
And tell them, Tom, her spirit sailed
To-night—upon the ebb.

John Kennedy.

THOMAS HARDY AND THE HUMAN DRAMA

Just when we're safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, someone's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as Nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul.

ROBERT BROWNING, *Bishop Blougram's Apology.*

Browning was a poet in many ways strongly opposed, yet in some ways strangely akin to Thomas Hardy. He was, at all events, too clear-sighted to overlook the vagaries of the Spirit which so constantly possessed Hardy's brooding mind, the Spirit of Irony, who, "just when we're safest," delights to wreck those very hopes that seemed securest, and with one mocking wave of the wand, turn them into fears that rap and knock and never fail to find entrance to the soul. But while Browning was ultimately concerned to justify the ways of God to man, Hardy was interested in no such task: he was simply an observer and recorder of human affairs, presenting no clearly-defined philosophy, stating the problems as he saw them, with little comment, and no offer of a solution. Yet the charge of pessimism commonly levelled against him is as irrelevant as the general belief in Browning's optimism. Both were great poets, and, as such, evade any superficial labelling. First and last, Hardy is a poet, whose stature has not yet received adequate recognition, and it is as a poet, not as a novelist or a philosopher, that he will eventually find his true place in the history of English literature.

Hardy's art is born primarily of a profound sense of the pathos and irony of the human drama, the sense of a overmastering Fate against which men struggle vainly, "as flies to wanton boys." Thus, inevitably, he is a poet of pity. And it was as the poet of pity that he saw the tragedy of war with ruthless clarity, cherishing no illusions of its "glory." Like Walt Whitman, another great poet of pity, he recognised this supreme human disaster as inevitable until the "all-earth-gladdening law of Peace, brought in by that Man Crucified" should reign, and was at the same time appalled by its tragic futility; it eat into his soul, and would give him no rest. In the poem "Channel Firing" he wrote:

All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christès sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

Here, again, man seems helpless to overcome his fate, to conquer the monster that catches him in its relentless grip. The law of human brotherhood is powerless to prevail against it. In "The Man I killed" Hardy wrote:

I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe;
Just so; my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough . . .
Yes, quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.

"Quaint and curious." Most men are aware of the hideous anomalies of war, yet they accept them, and not until they feel, passionately as the poet feels, the intolerable grief and heart-break, the unpardonable sacrilege, can there be hope of enduring peace. Because the poetry of pity is inevitably the poetry of mercy and reconciliation, Whitman wrote his lovely poem "Reconciliation," echoing more deeply the thought expressed in Hardy's colloquially-phrased "The Man I killed":

Word over all, beautiful as the sky!
Beautiful that war, and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost;
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly wash again, and ever again, this soiled world
For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead.
I look where he lies, white-faced and still, in the coffin—I draw near;
I bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

Death repairs the cord of divine brotherhood war has blasphemously severed. Small wonder that Whitman never fully recovered from the shock and horror of the American Civil War; his deeply sensitive, compassionately loving nature suffered an irreparable hurt; throughout he had worked tirelessly to alleviate the sufferings of the soldiers, sufferings of spirit, heart, mind and body, and had taken upon himself, gathered to his passionate heart, the burden of their pain, and it was a crucifixion from which he, in the very nature of things, could not recover; he bore for ever after the print of the cruel nails. Only those who feel the sufferings of their fellows as if they were their own are fit to form peace-treaties—and such are never invited to the task. So wars continue. Whitman said: "I do not ask the wounded man how he feels; I *am* the wounded man." It is the very *love* in poets like Whitman and Hardy that strips from their eyes the veils that cloud the vision of most men.

Too much stress has always been laid on Hardy's agnosticism. His poetry as a whole offers little evidence of it. There are few direct references to the Deity, or the Christian faith. Indeed, his attitude might be deduced more from his omissions than from his inclusions. There is an exception in the poem "New Year's Eve," which begins:

I have finished another year, said God,
In grey, green, white and brown;

I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm with the clod,
And let the last sun down.

also in the poems "God-forgotten," and "By the Earth's Corpse," and here, as in almost all his poetry, even in the most beautiful nature-lyrics, thoughts of death and the grave are predominant. Always his poems are impregnated with death, tombs, grave-yards, the worm, the clod, "the end of every man's desire." Always the shadow of death hovers over the sunlight or the gloom of life ; he cannot write of a chrysanthemum without returning to thoughts of the grave :

Why should this flower delay so long
To show its tremulous plumes ?
Now is the time of plaintive robin-song,
When flowers are in their tombs.

In autumn the flowers of summer have not only faded and died, they are "in their tombs." But curiously enough, in the group of poems to his dead wife this sense of the tomb is absent—as if, yet again, love had triumphed over death, bringing its own victorious sense of immortality. These poems are among the most poignant he ever wrote, gently pulsing with the sweet simplicity of deep human love, guileless, innocent, lacking any trace of the transcendentalism so dear to the metaphysical poets, making no attempt to "sublimate" natural human emotion, echoing simply and piercingly the broken utterance of the heart. In these lovely poems—"The Going," "Your last drive," "The Walk," "Rain on a Grave," "I found her out there," "Without Ceremony," "Lament" and "The Voice" are among the loveliest—human love is its own perfect justification, complete in the beauty of its simple tenderness. The grieving lover would have smiled sadly and wisely at any suggestion that he should transcend, by means attempted by the complex poets of metaphysical love, this divine-human emotion. The humanity is itself the divinity ; there is no need for "transmutation" ; God devised human love for human comfort, intending no such sublimation. Such sterile attempts wrong its gentle majesty. In heaven the angels neither give nor are given in marriage, but on earth no beauty can compare with the miracle of a love-relationship in perfection, nor any grief with the pain of its loss :

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair.
Can it be you that I hear ? Let me view you, then,
Standing as when I drew near to the town
Where you would wait for me : yes, as I knew you then,
Even to the original air-blue gown !

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
Travelling over the wet mead to me here,
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,
Heard no more again far or near ?

Thus I, faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from nor'ward,
And the woman calling.—("The Voice").

And, conversely, two of Hardy's loveliest poems, "Lyonnesse" and "Beeny Cliff," sparkle and radiate with the colours of love, even though "Beeny Cliff" is nostalgic :

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free,
The woman whom I loved so and who loyally loved me.
The pale mews planed below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day . . .

This poem contrasts strongly with "Neutral Tones," an early lyrci setting the stage for the poet's later development :

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden by God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod ;
—They had fallen on an ash, and were grey . . . . .
Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with greyish leaves.

Most of Hardy's poetry was painted in neutral tones, yet tones of great beauty, similar in quality to Shakespeare's line :

Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang,

and to the mind sensitised to poetry the appeal is irresistible. Every line Hardy wrote was packed with poetic feeling. Occasionally, a lovely lyrical poem rises from the couch of sorrow where his Muse lies grieving, such a poem as "A Singer Asleep," written in memory of Swinburne, and the exquisite poem "To Shakespeare After Three Hundred Years," ending with the lines :

So, like a strange bright bird we sometimes find
To mingle with the barn-door brood awhile,
Then vanish from their homely domicile—
Into man's poesy, we wot not whence,
Flew thy strange mind,
Lodged there a radiant guest, and sped for ever thence.

But Tragedy stands starkly in all its awful simplicity in the poem "The Tree," and the poet's own personal sense of tragic futility emerges in "In Tenebris III" :

There have been times when I well might have passed and the ending have come—
Points on my path when the dark might have stolen upon me, artless, unrueing—
Ere I had learned that the world was a welter of futile doing. . . .

yet the gloom is relieved by the exquisite lines :

On the noon when the half-sunny hours told that April was nigh,
And I upgathered and cast forth the snow from the crocus-border,

and again in the lovely nature-picture in "The Revisitation" :

Maybe flustered by my presence
Rose the pee-wits, just as all those years back, wailing soft and loud,
And revealing their pale pinions like a fitful phosphorescence
Up against a cope of cloud.

It has been said of Hardy that his life was uneventful. Such statements have similarly been made about the life of Brahms. Critics who draw these conclusions know nothing of the true life of the creative artist. Dramatic external events may perhaps be lacking, but there is drama enough—often too much—in the inner life. It is only necessary to read Hardy's many and varied love-poems, which sound the whole gamut of human emotion, to apprehend the truth. For example, in "The Minute before Meeting" :

The grey gaunt days dividing us in twain
Seemed hopeless hills my strength must faint to climb,

and again :

A dream of mine flew over the mead
To the halls where my old Love reigns ;
And it drew me on to follow its lead ;
And I stood at her window-panes.
And I saw but a thing of flesh and bone
Speeding on to its cleft in the clay ;
And my dream was scared, and expired on a moan,
And I whitely hastened away.

Then the poet grieves :

Ache deep, but make no moans ;
Smile out, but stilly suffer :
The paths of love are rougher
Than thoroughfares of stones,

and at last "He abjures Love," crying :

I speak as one who plumbs
Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
Clear views and certain.
But—after love what comes ?
A scene that lours,
A few sad vacant hours,
And then, the Curtain.

Rarely, infinitely rarely in Hardy's poetry, there is a hint of a hope unknown, answering all the doubts and questionings. It is the hope hidden in the heart of nature, known to nature's creatures perhaps, but hidden from man, as he suggests in "The Darkling Thrush" :

> I could think there trembled through
> His happy good-night air
> Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
> And I was unaware.

"Some blessed hope"—the sense that somewhere, hidden from our sight, is the assurance that in spite of evil appearances, "all is well," as Katherine Mansfield wrote in the last words of her journal a few weeks before she died. For that assurance we eternally search and hunger. Hardy never found it; he lived and wrote always as the observer and reporter of human life in all its pathos, irony, tragedy and beauty, stricken by the solemnity and mystery of the drama, offering no answer, and denied the consolations, withdrawn from the succour of faith, revealed through Christianity. Perhaps it was all no more than "a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing." Yet—perhaps not, for Hardy was a poet, and for the poet there is richness, warmth, ardour, and above all, an inevitable significance in the spectacle of life, defying the recurrent sense of futility, and although Hardy could never accept any glibly happy theory that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, he could write of "the opal and the sapphire of the wandering western sea," of the winds and the woods, and the wide spaces of the Dorset uplands, and in spite of death's shadow and the certainty of the grave, despite the ironic laughter of the gods overwatching human life, and no conviction of a God of mercy, life to him meant intensely, though he may not, as Browning, have felt that it necessarily meant, ultimately, good. But that it should mean at all is the poet's justification, the wordless answer to his questioning and pain.

DALLAS KENMARE.

TO ANY MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD

SO frail a thing
your tender flesh
to set against
the solid might
of fireproof tanks
and tommy-guns
and bombs that fall
from aeroplanes.

But Life will win
the fight with Death.
The vital spark
is not quenched yet,
nor will be when
the Luftwaffe
is fossilised
in dusty tomes.

MARY MAIR.

THE POETRY OF STEPHEN SPENDER

IN the pages of his thinly-concealed autobiography *Lions and Shadows*, Christopher Isherwood comments on a story written by one of his characters, Stephen Savage: "Its grammar was awful, its dialogue stilted and its style naïve—but it did something to you; you accepted the absurd situations without question; you really cared about the blundering, tormented young man. The hero was so absorbingly interested in himself, in his own sensations and in everybody who came into contact with him that you couldn't help sharing his interest." I do not think that there has ever been a more astute summary of both the limitations and the freakish success of Stephen Spender as a novelist and poet. On completing a book like the *Burning Cactus*, the reader's first sensation is one of horror at the reckless use of imagery, the crude and often eccentric prose-style, and a complete lack of artistic discipline. Here is a profusion of talent, expended without any taste or discernment on producing an effect of chaos and hysteria. Like the dream of an opium-eater, everything appears in heroic proportions, transfigured from the hum-drum and the banal to a grandiose, tragic or laughably melodramatic scale. Yet at the centre of this astonishing universe, for ever caught in the spot-light of his own creation, stands Mr. Spender himself, talking volubly of the neurotic young men—lovable, shy, gauche—who are not only characters in the drama he is presenting to us, but also projections of his own individuality. And we have to listen. His voice, for all its absurdity, has an accent which compels the hearer to be attentive. Passionately, vehemently, with touches of exaggeration and no humour, Mr. Spender talks of himself; like some talented *regisseur*, he has an instinctive flair for creating suspense and winning the submission of his audience; he is master of the dramatic exit and the stage whisper. We applaud against our will.

Let us examine one of his best known stories, *The Dead Island*. Apart from the title, there are other affinities between this study in neurosis and Arnold Bocklin's famous picture. Both Spender and Bocklin paint sentimentalised nature with a tragic-heroic accentuation; both tend to rant convincingly; and both, in spite of their grand nostalgia and typically German romanticism, are figures of great importance. It is easy enough to snigger at them; it is easy enough to deride their theatrical gestures and to accuse them of posturing; but it is difficult not to be impressed. Spender's story has certain obvious faults; among the rich mass of jewellery that he heaps on the counter, there are worthless trinkets, pinchbeck and trashy ornaments, vulgar settings, and even imitation stones. But his imagination and his obsession with every aspect of human conduct, his sympathy, his desire to confess and to explain, his humourless intensity, are all absorbing; and in spite of its imperfections,

his prose is highly sensitive to every demand that he makes of it. This story of modern Orestes, pursued like the hero of T. S. Eliot's *Family Reunion,* by the Furies of his own imagination, contains many crudities, is weakly constructed, and even degenerates into burlesque. But fortunately it includes passages in which Spender rises above these limitations, producing magnificent descriptive sequences and illuminating his chaos with a violent pity and insight. This is a justification for all the banalities that have gone before.

In passing, it should be noted that there is an early symphonic poem by Rachmaninoff which bears the same title, "The Dead Island." I doubt whether Spender is aware of the existence of this work, but like Bocklin's picture, it too has many affinities with the story. Conceived on a grandiose scale, it is over-orchestrated, flashy, and sometimes ridiculous ; and yet there are also interludes of sombre beauty, in which the composer escapes from the lush Wagnerianism of the rest of the work and writes directly and without affectation. The same can be said of the whole of *The Burning Cactus.*

Now all this discussion of Spender's prose is essential to a critical examination of his verse. Because a book like *The Backward Son* is predominantly autobiographical, it illumines many of the difficulties in the poems. For example, "The Ambitious Son," part of the recent *Ruins and Visions,* ceases to be obscure once one has learnt that Spender is obsessed with the fame of his father : and the clue to this knowledge is found in the prose works. Again, the early poem, "Abrupt and Charming Mover . . . .," immediately comes into focus if one has read *The Cousins, By the Lake,* or any other of the stories which tell of the frustration of adolescent love. In prose these problems have been stated without abbreviation. But the verse is an extracted essence, full of ellipse and therefore baffling to those who are ignorant of what the poet is trying to say.

I have spoken of the faults in *The Burning Cactus,* the stilted language, the diffuseness and the tendency to hysteria. Much of this is equally true of the verse. Spender has a singularly rich imagination, comparable in its luxuriousness and lack of discipline to Coleridge's. As a result, he often enrages the critic with absurd imagery, over-writing or plain silliness. Although at his best he can control this richness, producing a poem as singularly beautiful as "No Orpheus, no Eurydice," or "Wings of a Dove," at his worst he is guilty of the ludicrous "To Natasha," with its sentimental and ninetyish flavour.

I think that Spender is aware of these faults ; at any rate, many of them have disappeared in the new book *Ruins and Visions.* He is learning the use of restraint and of understatement. Five years ago it would have

been impossible for him to write a poem like "Stranger, you who hide my love . . . ." This lyric has an Elizabethan frankness ; while its note of suppressed rage and, later, pity and forgiveness, is entirely effective. There have been few poems like it since Yeats wrote "The Fool by the Roadside."

In many ways, Spender's development as a poet is similar to Yeats'. Both began with a collection of poems which were direct, lyrical, and full of promise. Both became luxuriant, wrote too much with too little care, and finally were unsatisfied. Both set about refining and purging their verse. "The Still Centre" was a failure and at the same time a necessary step ; lacking the firm cartilage of rhyme, written diffusely and without self-criticism, it disappointed those who had expected much from the author of *Poems*. Then followed *Ruins and Visions*, with its revelation of a violent imagination, aware of its deficiencies and attempting to surmount the problems of form and development. Naturally, the book was not entirely a success : neither was Yeats's *Green Helmet*. But, apart from all its merits and faults, I believe that it marks yet another chrysalis stage in the progress of one of our most interesting poets. It shows that Spender can and will develop, even as Yeats did.

I do not know whether there is any significance in the fact that most of the poems in *Ruins and Visions* are personal, not political. I myself believe that Spender is at his best when he ceases to concentrate on certain political questions—Liberalism in decline, war, Marxism—and writes from personal experience. *The Still Centre* is full of political poems, which may perhaps be one reason why it seems as stuffy and over-crowded as a Victorian drawing-room. Once Spender attempts to discuss problems which cannot be stated in terms of himself or his own five senses, he seems to choke, either with indignation or embarrassment, becomes incoherent and has the greatest difficulty in saying anything at all. Compare "A Footnote" with "Ultima ratio regum." The first is sadly trite, and even less readable than Marx's Chapter on the Working Day (on which it is based). The second, for all its sentimentality, is a comment on war so brief and so telling that one critic has compared it to Wilfred Owen's "Futility." What is the reason for this difference ? Surely that the sight of a dead boy under the olive-trees is something which appeals visually to Spender's imagination ; while the pages of Marx, being purely cerebral, escape him when he attempts to translate them into verse. As a poet he is incapable of "thinking passionately"; he is not a Metaphysical.

There are, of course, exceptions to this rule—"Polar Exploration," for example, and "The Elementary School Children." The success of such poems depends on another factor which I shall discuss in a moment.

Spender is particularly sensitive to certain emotions. Like a poor

barometer, he is only accurate when recording stormy weather. Grief, tragic dignity, parting, renunciation, anger, he can express them all. It is only when he is attempting to describe happiness that he becomes ludicrously inadequate. In this context, it is interesting to compare that section of *Ruins and Visions* called "A Separation," with the last section "Visions." How much better are the Ruins! Before the blitz there were parts of London which were sham, tasteless and even hideous: now, injured, gutted, scorched and ravaged with fire, they possess a certain nobility. The same might be said of Spender's poetry. "A Separation" contains some of the most moving lyrics written in the last twenty years; "fatuous" is the only word which describes "Visions." The result is identical when Spender tries to portray the ecstasy of love. His attempts are as literary as the story of Adam and Eve.

There is one other emotion to which Spender is abnormally sensitive. Like the street-lamps passed on a dark road, it recurs continually, flooding an indifferent chaos with areas of light. This is his pity. It is a quality which seems to be completely absent in many of his contemporaries (Spender could never have written the heartless "Ballad of Miss G.") and which he alone possesses in great abundance. At its worst, it is merely a neurotic self-love—the glycerine tears which the poet believes to be genuine. At its greatest, it embraces all humanity, freeing Spender from his limitations and making it possible for him to move from the narrow circle of his own experience to universal experience—from

> 'Yes. The will decided. But how can the heart decide,
> Lying deep under the surface
> Of the level reasons the eye sees—
> How can the heart decide
> To banish this loved face for ever?'

to:

> 'For the world is the world
> And not the slain
> Nor the slayer, forgive,
> Nor do wild shores
> Of passionate histories
> Close on endless love;
> Though hidden under seas
> Of chafing despair,
> Love's need does not cease.'

It is this quality which ensures his survival, setting him among the lesser immortals. He will live.

FRANCIS KING.

[Other articles in this "Contemporary Poets" series include: *Ezra Pound,* M. Stewart, Sept.-Oct., 1942; *C. D. Lewis,* R. Gant, July-Aug., 1942; *De la Mare,* R. Garratt, May-June, 1942; *Modern Poets,* N. Moore, March-April, 1942; *W. Gibson,* E. Casson; *Survey of Contemporary Expression,* R. Shahani, Jan.-Feb., 1942; *Irish Poets,* R. Greacen, Nov.-Dec., 1941; *Spender,* J. Waller, Sept.-Oct., 1941; *Auden,* H. Palmer,

July-Aug., 1941; *F. Berry,* G. Wilson Knight; *Cambridge Poetry,* J. Waller, May-June, 1941; *Heppenstall, Empson, O. Williams,* J. Waller, Jan.-Feb., 1941; *MacNeice and Auden,* J. Waller, Sept.-Oct., 1940; *Oxford Poets,* J. Waller (2); *W. B. Yeats,* H. T. Hunt Grubb, May-June, 1940; *L. Whistler,* R. Fuller, July-Aug., 1940; *C. J. Brennan,* R. Hughes; *R. Frost,* T. Heywood; *Oxford Poets,* J. Waller (1), March-April, 1940; *A. Young,* R. Fuller, Jan.-Feb., 1940.—Ed.].

THOSE YEARS

I HAVE lived through those years
those years between the wars.
They were the years of my youth
my soul bears their savage scars.
Years without aim without name
the shaming maiming years
bit with bitterness out of my heart
a sorrow which scorned its own tears,
a hope whose wish was death
a faith in the absence of God.
Bitter and hard was the pathway
I and my company trod.
We learnt to despise our leaders
we learnt to distrust ourselves
fear was the food they would feed us
and fear they crammed into themselves.
Idle to blame the men
blame rather the years
twenty one ruinous years
which carried into the past
most of the good
most of the pure
most of the noble
all that was sure.
Twenty-one frantic years
who will survive their fears ?
their subtle certain snares ?
Did we eat
any wheat
amid their choking tares ?
None may forget the years
whom their memory sears,
Now they are swept away
May we not weep their tears ?

RAINE ANDERSON.

TIRED DAY

TIRED day,
Come to thy rest;
The sun slips over the edge of the world
And night creeps over the brow of the hill,
Sleep creeps down the stairs of night,
And the stars wake . . . . . awake:
So fade from the world, Tired day,
And take thy rest.

GILLIAN SLADE-BAKER.

HARPFORD WOOD

A PEACEFUL wood lies nestling towards a hill
Upon whose top a semaphore once stood
To signal the approach of Bonaparte,
When England was in danger long ago.
The men of Devon stood to arms, alert,
And ready to defend their native soil.
Napoleon dared not try his fortune then.
But now by night the shaken echoes ring
Through Harpford Wood of crashing, hostile bombs.
The timid badger peering from his hole,
Regards the sky with wonder, lit by fires
Besprinkled by the roaring aeroplanes
Upon the noble city of the West.
Ay, never were the walls of Jericho
Destroyed as were the streets of Exeter.
The slaughter, and the misery thus caused
To the survivors, honest, peaceful folk,
Exemplify the "culture" of the Hun.
The day of reckoning is at hand: forget
We shall not till the price be paid.
Behold the wood, so beautiful, so calm,
Each little valley with its rivulet
Descending through the tangle with its voice
In liquid whisper greets the ancient beech,
Which spreads a blessing on the path beneath.
Here you may pause awhile, and bring to mind
The balm of Nature to the troubled soul.
These noble trees, what have they looked upon?
The silent growth of Time in sheltered peace:
Serenity and dignity combined
They stand; the symbol of a constant mind.

GILBERT COLERIDGE.

THE INTENSE MOMENT

WHEN first I walked along the corridor
I realised they'd shut the inner door
The womb saw fruitlessness soon after me
And my great effort was finality.
That I am living now, it will suffice—
Close the doorway on the light
Unknown quantity with a heavy price.
—The outer door is far away, but I
Know it is closed, sense it and know why
I must touch all things, breathe womb-deep
Long to waken, hesitate to sleep
In the face of the inevitable display
Of sinking, swift affliction and decay
I have learned to expect the closed door
Though the passage twists a lot before
I see it. Constant reflection on the past men
Guides me to my threescore years and ten.
Without this knowledge, I might live to be
Most infinite, my own eternity.
But seeing all this tissue, this strength fade
I realise how feebly we are made.
Some there will tell you that there is no door
At the extreme striving end of my corridor
Just an intricacy of light and maze
An accumulation of the good days, the bad days.
—For me, *this* is enough
I am not made of such presumptuous stuff
As hopes the chemistry of the world includes
Most everlasting and brief interludes.
My interlude is life, round and complete.
No Phoenix I, this vision will suffice
No risk of bliss, houri or Paradise
Hemmed in, I find my gourmet satisfied
In sipping the one glass. The passage wide
And varied. Here and there
A window letting in the golden air.
Encounters with strange faces, touch of lips
Memory, conception, at my fingertips
And gusts of warmth pervading, part of me
Play round the doors at each extremity.

She is a white lady, by the turn of her head
I know she is most pure. You would not know

The eating flame; yet those long-dead have said
No woman is all woman, not the calmest soul
Madonna gazing from the fading wall
With big doe's watchfulness. They interpret that look
The detached recognition of rosary, of book
As the inborn watchfulness of years to come
And the (albeit subconscious) knowledge of the womb.

Woman was born lacking, and man too complete
But his accumulation serves to turn
The wheel that moves his mind to loftiness.
Experience widens all. The power to give
Lies well within him; but woman, guarding all,
Spends time regarding shadows on the wall.

MARGERY WHITE.

TRAVELLER

A TRAVELLER came from the corners of his heart;
haunted, unhappy, he hunted release
from a trigger-springed grief and the empty dart
of the bolted blackness that broke his peace.

A vision held in the chime of a clock
dangled before him its carrot's nose.
He raved and ranted, but Time wouldn't talk,
was silent as flowers in their mannequin pose.

Till Death came easy (for Death was wise)—
Took stand for Truth and stood the test,
he died with a handkerchief round his eyes
and a clear cry of joy in his breast.

MIRAGE

I SAW a girl walking on the water,
the swish of her skirts the bright waves curl.
I heard her delicate thin laughter
in the white winds wisp-wand furl.

Love in my hand I offered lightly
across a spume-spent wave.
But sun rolled up his running beam,
grey sea became her grave.

Capt., 9th Cameronians. J. W. LINDSAY.

COVENTRY

November Sundown—

FOREGROUND of patterned fields and bold
Design of poplars black and gold;
With bars of crimson streaking western blue.
Here, like unwieldy monsters of the deep,
Wallow balloons in eastward sea of cloud.
Beneath broods dread of night. The shroud
Of fear and darkness falls anew;
And the doomed city prays—for sleep.

November Moonrise—

Background of poplars, black on silver grey.
A mystic city flooded in dream-light!
Where factories and slender spires alike
Are merged in shimmering beauty 'neath the rounding moon.
An owl's hoot. A rush of wings in flight.
There where the elm-tree's shadows strike
Across the grey-white road, bestrewn
With phantom boughs.

November Night—

Hell's angels' symphony!
The wail of sirens—demon hordes in pain!
The drone and whine of planes that endlessly
Hurl fire and fearful death.
The roar of guns; the rattling door
And swaying walls; the heaving floor.
Whistle of bombs and blast and crash,
Ear-splitting smash
Of unnumbered panes of glass.
Then a hundred fireworks crack,
Windows flame crimson that were black
And fire tongues leap and lick
'Mid shouts and moans; and men turn sick
And sob in helpless rage.
Hour after hour. Each one an endless age
Of minutes horror filled.

November Dawn—

The pall of smoke still shrouds
The desolation and the countless dead.
While those who live—the homeless or afraid—
Begin the day's heart-rending exodus
Past frozen poplars, pointing to the clouds. J. G. MARASH.

BARNARD CASTLE

TOO old for loveliness,
Precariously perched upon the hill,
A boy's stone throwing pile,
The crumbling castle stares
Across the gasworks at the Yorkshire moors
Where salted winds blow rain-filled clouds
And dim the golden light of day.
A burned-out factory's chimney tears
The skyline to the north
And all the river's eastern bank
Is drained of love.
Only the youngest girls are here,
Flirting with boys in khaki dress,
Laughing before the bridges till they die.
The river weeps and passes by
Shadowed with their dreams.
Here all the compass points are set:
The grey planes cut the fretting clouds
And sail towards the later day,
Time stops and our hearts engines die away.

Trooper, R.A.C. JOHN T. KIRK.

ADOLESCENCE

THERE is a brighter green than this
That glows upon the trees:
Somewhere beyond a sweetheart's kiss
Lie lipless ecstasies.

Dead earth, show me your hidden fire!
Shut eyes, lift up your lids!
But no, the unkissable desire
Comes when no lover bids.

It comes uncalled, it will not stay
Where empty hearts demand;
It leaves the light of every day
Forlorn upon the land.

But one day I shall lift my fists
And tear the veil apart,
And grip behind these grinning mists
The Breaker of my heart.

S. M. RUSH.

IN PRAISE OF HOME AND ROUGH WEATHER

TIRED and sad, I have of late
Yearned for winter's snow,
To see the cold grey listless sky
And the white earth below;
To hear the grass, to hear the trees
Whispering each to each,
Then moan beneath the driving rain
That lashes on the beach
And on the hills, and through the streets
And in the muddy lanes,
Refreshing raw the upturned face,
Now the rich fruitful plains.
Or to return and listen
To winds that murmur low
Across the fields and through the trees
In the land of long ago.
I would lie still and rest there
Amid the scented grass
And watch, when day is ending,
The purple shadows pass
Across the lonely mountains
That sleep in lands afar,
That loom above the rivers,
That fain would greet a star . . . . .

The desire to know the thunder,
The snow, the mud, the rain,
Causes my restless spirit
To turn to home again;
Far, far away the heart lies
When the heat is stifling me;
When the rising of the eternal sun
Is life's monotony.

Lt., West African Force. DEREK B. READE.

UNION IS DEATH

OUT of the Universal,
Out of the Infinite Same,
Out of the Homogeneous whole
Struggling and crying we came,
Small and naked and different
Bearing the seeds of strife;

Many from one, as planets from Sun,
That is the way of life.

Back to the Same the different,
Small shall be merged in Great,
That which is high shall be levelled low,
The crooked shall be made straight.
Back to the earth the body,
Back to the air the breath,
Back to the Whole the living Soul,
That is the Law of Death.

Life is the love of true men
But some incline to die,
For Death the Leveller is their God,
"Equality" is their cry,
Order and Law are their desire,
The World in One Control;
This is their aim who love the Same
And worship the Deathly Whole.

But we are a living people
Who live in a separate isle,
They shall not unify us by war
Nor yet by talk and guile;
The living nations we have bred
By love not Law unite,
Though devils urge we will not merge
While we have strength to fight. GEOFFREY DOBBS.

FROM A WINDOW

HOUR of siesta!
But across the street in the cavernous shade
Of an archway, two lovers stayed
Unable to rest—their hearts as hot as the sun.
Then a spinster passed with aggressive feet
Striking the silence: with obtrusive beat
Of bracelets on a quivering wrist.
But the lovers paid not the slightest heed
To the stare of envenomed virginal need—
They were young and they kissed.
—After all, there were kisses enough and to spare
For an elderly virgin's vicarious share
In two hearts as hot as the sun—. JUANITA PEIRSE.

MANY CANDLES

It is not death
But the waiting that is intolerable.
Would that he came as a compassionate friend,
Laying smooth fingers on the lids of my eyes
Closing them.
Closing them for ever
On the familiar assemblage which was life.
On the accumulated regrets,
The futile anxieties
And recriminations evanescent as shadows on the moon's surface.

Waiting here,
I have seen standing back in the years
That all these things
Changed no courses,
Influenced no stars,
Diffused no moon's light,
Tempered no sun's rays.
Oh death, come soon,
The waiting is intolerable,
I am tired of watching the slow-burning of the candles.

A. H. Cordwell.

WHEN I AM DEAD

WILL they perchance peruse my writings through
And from their star behold my tend'rest earth
As fruitless wilderness, or field of flowers
Sprung from the living seed of Nazareth ?

Will pity's torrents that so often drenched
Have washed away the silt of weary years ;
Will they find traces of the wise men's star,
King's gold, frankincense and embalming myrrh ?

Or, with expressive eye, nod each to each
This was her secret ; this, salvation's death ;
What strange philosophy behind dull words . . . . .
Crude bricks to build poetic houses with . . . . .
Scattered on God's wind be all words of mine
If they leave not full loving from my store,
Paid be the greatest debt e'er owed to me
If those who read should love e'en little more.

Mary Savidge.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

THERE was no argument nor reasoning
Of this advantage, nor of that designed;
They laughed, and thoughtlessly rich seasoning
of jest exchanged—to death were none resigned.
They fell. Indifferent now they silent lie
Upon the altar of the English earth.
And these have shared with Death the morning sky,
And know no more the ground that gave them birth.
Is this their blood which stains the distant edge
of burning cloud with crimson arabesque?
Is this their breath which shapes the forms that fledge
the upper air with cirrus down grotesque?
Now ours the duty to achieve the more
Since gayly these such heavy burden bore.

Major, O.B.E. ADRIAN CORNWELL-CLYNE.

ONE CROW SORROW

One crow sorrow
Came hopping this way
Over the slopes
Where the shadows play.
(Black were its wings)
Came one crow sorrow
Woe in the day.

Pence and prudence
(This my sin)
All beguiled
By a worthless pin
(From the pedlar's pack)
One crow sorrow
Rue in the day.

Butter-white candles
Fire to soar
But never came Christ
To the waiting door.
(Not one friend)
One crow sorrow
Hate in the day.

Deep in woollen clover
Hidden was the snare
Beauty lay broken
And pitiful, there.
(And singing ceased)
One crow sorrow
Blood in the day.

Down by the river
Thickly spread
Crumbling Hemlock's
Coarse white bread.
(A bitter feast)
One crow sorrow
Bane in the day.

Wet woods crushed
By the thunder-wheel,
Death and the foxglove
Naught can heal.
(O, the cruel wheel)
One crow sorrow
Doom in the day.

One crow sorrow
Came hopping this way—
All that is evil
Of deep dismay
(On stark black wings) . . .
Came one crow sorrow
Dark to the day.

IRENE P. TURNER.

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCV

A Day in Manhattan, by A. M. Sullivan (Dutton, New York), an intriguing book from the pen of the President of the Poetry Society of America, is very worth reading. It is a lively estimate from Mr. Sullivan of to-day and now. It is divided in five groups. "Midnight Caravan" is the first (radio poem in five voices), then "Transcontinental" is the second group (radio poem in six voices), "A Day in Manhattan" the third group (a symphonic poem for four male voices), "Psalm Against the Darkness" is the fourth group (a symphonic poem in eight voices—four male and four female), the fifth group is "Song of the Soil" (symphonic poem in four voices).

It is not an easy thing to quote from this book though there is much quotable, however. From the fourth group, "Psalm Against the Darkness" we give the following:

VOICE: What is war? (*casual speech*).

MALE VOICE: War is a confession of weakness in the laws of logic.

FEMALE VOICE: War is a device by which men settle problems of reason by acts of violence.

MALE VOICE: War is the natural law functioning to control population.

FEMALE VOICE: War is the means by which men satisfy their desire for heroes and martyrs.

MALE VOICE: War is a confused definition of honour, peace and justice. (*and so on*).

In this same Psalm this cry is arresting:

MALE VOICE (Basso):

What have we learned of living after ten thousand years of trying?
What have learned of death, after ten thousand years of dying?
Where is the ancient well of light in which to cleanse the spirit?
And where is the voice of God and who hath the ears to hear it?

In *There will be Bread and Love,* by Robert P. Tristram Coffin (Macmillan Company, New York), as with his previous books we meet life-values as seen through the eyes of a New England poet. Mr. Coffin's life has been marked with the awarding to him of many literary honours. He holds the degree of Doctor of Letters from Bowdoin, and of the University of Maine. Let us read "New Englanders are Maples":

New Englanders are like the pasture slopes
Behind their barns. You put them down as sober,
And then one day you wake up, and you find them
Red and golden maples of October.

It takes adversity or coming close
To trouble and hard times to make them glow,
Then they really flower as swamp maples
Flower on the edge of frost and snow.

You might suppose that they were never going,
To be much more than middling fair to good,
When suddenly they are new people wholly,
Burning bushes blazing in the wood.

Maybe they had such hard time getting born,
What with the cold and all, they feel they must
Be born again, and so in age and trial
They blossom out of death and out of dust.

They are good people for your nearest neighbours
When the deep old earth's foundation slips,
It is good to have a mind behind the barn
The flame and beauty of the Apocalypse.

Perhaps this reviewer was drawn to the above having been born in the little town of Bennington, Vermont, New England. "I Heard Spring" follows:

I heard Spring a thousand miles away
In the thin end of a Winter night,
It came and found me in the midst of dreams
With only starlit icicles for light.

It spoke to me in sleep, I heard it plain,
It said three words, but those three words were law.
I woke up smiling, for I knew I had
Heard a crow sing out his caw, caw, caw.

The bird had kept his sharp tongue in his head
Long months, but it stabbed like a sword blade now,
And violets would soon smoke up the woods
And crows and bluets march beside the plow.

In a letter recently received from Mr. Coffin he sends us word of the publishing of his Patten Lectures in *The Substance that is Poetry* (Macmillan Co., New York), telling us the book is an exposition of his ideas on poetry at large and an explanation of many of his own poems.

"In the last five years I have given readings from my poems at about 400 colleges, clubs, etc., and my belief in poetry as an art belonging to the people grows steadily stronger as I do this. The people of these United States are helping me grow as a poet! And just now, I am at work on a new lot of ballads, on America at large, on American big-wigs and little-wigs, the telephone, sewing machine, Saturday night bath, baked beans, Boston cod, habit of naming sons after Presidents, the swimming hole, jack-knives, school teachers, lectures, mormons, drunkards, Yankee pedlars—anything that is typically American. And I think this collection of ballads is the best thing I have done in this kind. You shall see them probably in the spring."

This is a *big book* on a *big* subject: every page yields something worth remembering about the manufacture of poetry.

The Table of Contents lists the following: The Solid Substance of Poetry, Poetry: Language of the Definite Article, The Independence of a Poem, Can a Poem Be Explained? Poetry as Improvement on Life, Light as a Poetic Substance.

To prove that poetry is not the product of a factory we turn to page 79 of this valuable book and read the following in the chapter: Can a Poem Be Explained?

"There are critics and poets too, who assert, with especial vehemence in our time, that a poem is a thing in itself, a whole, that it needs no commentary, no gloss, that all attempts to explain any aspect of it are not only futile but reprehensible. A poem, they say, is a law unto itself, like its creator. It is accountable to no tribunal of the people. It carries its own justification within. If it is sometimes meaningless—as it is often to-day—then this meaningless is its real meaning. If it is obscure or disintegrated, then obscurity and disintegration are essentials of its being. A poem is. And that is all that can be said of it. All attempts at justifying it, at sharing it with others, have no justification whatever. A poem is pure poetry, and all remarks about it are sheer impurity."

We highly commend this book.

It is a daring undertaking to write of events of such magnitude as are presented in War II, while such events are occurring—this is what Stanton Coblentz has done well

in *Winds of Chaos* (The Wings Press), and well done. Difficult to quote from, covering some terrible scenes of this terrible war—it is graphic and compelling, and has drawn such comments as the following from Jessie B. Rittenhouse:

"You have done a superb piece of work in *Winds of Chaos.* I wish it could be in the hands of every soldier of the Allied Nations, it would show them what they are fighting for and what the real background of this war is. It stirred me to the depths as I read it, focusing, as it does, all the horror and brutality against which we are fighting, and it is done with so much drama that one can see it enacted. Your flexibility of technique throughout the poem is remarkable."

All the talk in the world can never tell what a glance at the thing itself can tell:

In the court of the nations and ages, the councils of light and of time,
Will they call you a victor, O Captain? O Leader ensanguined with crime!
The tears that you squandered in rivers, the blood that you wasted like rain,
The bone-heaps and ashes of kingdoms—will these by your triumph, your gain?

By the screams of the infants you murdered, the sobs of the wives you bereaved,
By the moans of the drowned and the burning—by these shall your fame be retrieved?
By the busts and the lamps that you shattered, the darkness in pulpit and school,
The chains round the neck of a Pastor—by these shall we honour your rule?

By the sparks and the embers and rubble, the lamed and the blinded unknown,
The towns that you smashed, and the vessels that sank in the foaming alone;
By the scars of a world, and the maggots that preyed on the flesh of its sons—
By these do you bid to be worshipped on high with the Radiant Ones?

Oh, better to perish resisting, the butt of the cold, dripping axe,
And sleep with the laurelless heroes who died of your dastard attacks!
Yes, here is the goal and the glory, though we pass like a vapour, a flame!
For we'll triumph when truth, resurrected, shall trample your works and your name!

Who would not be justly proud to have the distinguished voice of John Hall Wheelock lifted in praise? The following is quoted in respect to *Hearts Wine,* by Douglas V. Kane (Wings Press, New York):

"The opening sonnets, and many others throughout the book, are of great beauty, and the craftsmanship is sure and unobtrusive."

"Summer Solitude" is a fine example of the ease with which Mr. Kane writes a sonnet:

Capture the solitude of homeless hills
And wild-sprung meadows under naked sky,
Of breezes coursing with a quiltless sigh,
Unbounded by the town's conflicting wills.

Far from the tremor of the stormy street
Stand in the glittering silence of the dew
That tips the bladed fields, the rolling view
Of mountains in the stillness of the heat.

This be your task of spirit: Find the place
Where larks make music in a glistening air,
Free from the church of smoke in quiet space—
The heart of earth and heaven in open there!
Then draw the peaceful lesson to your soul,
Be fragment of this still, but mighty Whole.

In congratulating Eric Wilson Barker on his first published collection, *The Planetary Heart* (Wings Press, New York), one also congratulated him on having two such distinguished foreworders as John Cowper Powys and Benjamin DeCasseres, and they in turn fortunate in having to comment on so gifted a book. Says Mr. DeCasseres:

> "In these days of 'modernized verse' (which means, really, the bankruptcy of the poetic imagination) it is a nostalgic joy to turn to Eric Barker, a poet of an ancient Parnassian breed."

He ends his appreciation by giving one of his favourites, "note the simplicity, the chastity, the ease, the irrevocable spiritual journey of this little poem from beginning to end": "The Hunter and His Dog."

I woke and listened in the lapsing night,
And heard Orion blow his golden horn.
I saw the Hunter sheathe his sword of light
And lead old Sirius down the fields of morn.

The far hunt ended and the long night done,
Follows the faithful hound on those bright heels.
Behind his master's swift descent he wheels
And bays his greeting at the rising sun.

The long chase over, gratefully to rest,
Below the hills, beyond the farthest tree,
Inseparable, they journey down the west
And bathe together in the morning sea.

There is an affected high emotion in the poetry of Mr. Barker. There is ferment in the lines without which there can be no poetry. Let us read "Love's Absence":

The cycling years their hearts divided never,
The bitter wedge of absence love in vain.
The changing seasons found love changeless ever,
In dreams they walked those bannered ways again.
Each saw the other deeply, as an image
Enclosed within the mirror of a stream
When alders lean at evening to envisage
Themselves within the crystal of their dream.
As in the night the lodestar draws toward her
Beyond the vast all wave-bewildered eyes,
Shining above the wilderness of water,
A clam, eternal pharos of the skies.
So constant was love's image, set apart,
Within the cryptic chancel of the heart.

A moving account of love and loss we find in the touching poem, "Ghost."

Each night before I fall asleep
The creaking stair betrays your tread:
I listen in the darkness warm and deep,
Knowing that you are dead.

Again the dreadful vigil I begin,
Knowing what door has opened in the gloom,
Where, quiet as any ghost you enter in,
And move about the room.

You move about the room and touch the chairs,
Your hands familiar shapes and patterns trace,
The while you look beyond, as one who stares
Unseeing into space.

Your fingers stray among the books we knew;
Along the shelves of Rousseau and Voltaire,
And standing there, the moonlight shining through,
Lays beauty on your hair.

And moving with a gesture known of old,
Strangely you smile and turn your head,
And lo, the moon shines through you, white and cold!
You move toward the bed!

And tremblingly I count the hours, one by one,
Strike in the awful silence, loud and deep,
Knowing upon the midnight you are gone,
And I can sleep, can sleep.

Mr. Barker writes us:

"I think I can sum up my feelings for poetry in the following: I cannot think that the true meaning of poetry has ever changed. It lies in the beauty and mystery that haunt the eternal verities, and the abortive attempts of the new school of poets to change it, coupled with the brutal arrogance of the times only makes me cling more tenaciously to the truth as Keats saw it.

"It seems to me that the poets who continually stress war as the true tenor of our days and write about it as if it were their solemn duty to do so are using cannon for battering rams and beating on the empty air.

"Surely it is time for the poets to write again of what our hearts have inherited by the supreme miracle of birth—not of the crimes and stupidity of mankind—but rather of the wind that blows over these things and mounds them in the deserts of the future, of the wind, the sea, the sun and the earth itself, for therein lie the mysteries that have haunted man's spirit from time immemorial, and therein, too, lie the seeds of great poetry, as the literature of the past bears witness.

"But I think there are good omens stirring, and it is likely that out of the very violence of to-day will come the imaginative poets of to-morrow to write again of man's true heritage."

It is of interest to know *Obbligato,* by Mildred Mitchell (Bruce Humphries, Boston) won the one hundred dollar award conducted annually by the Ohio Poetry Society. Mrs. Mitchell was formally associate editor of *The American Poetry Magazine.* In the following poem, "This Flight," we meet Mrs. Mitchell, her poems expressing a range of emotion and experience set forth through a gifted vocabulary:

Deep earth and high hill-tops, close swiftly around me !
This that I flee from is heartbreak ; confound me
With quiet complete as the quiet of tomb is
Where no one remembers what laughter or doom is.
Say nothing of God and His infinite verities.
Nothing of men, traditions, posterities !
This that I flee from is heartbreak ; enfold me
With armour of distance as darkness shall hold me
Eons to come from the places where light is.
Conceal for a breath how futile all flight is !

In another mood the author gives us "For This is Sure" :

When strangers asked me why I wished to leave you
How could I tell them that I did not know,
That if I could but name a single reason
There would no longer be a need to go ?

For this sure—you did not need to lose me :
Hurts can be healed when all is said and done.
There is no grievance that would take me from you
If whitened ashes could but whisper one.

Maude Clark Hough has well described *Life is a Game and Other Poems* (Field, New York), in a prefatory poem :

A book, like a swallow, will take you on trips
Much farther and faster than autos or ships ;
It goes even swifter than airplanes, and higher—
It gives you right impulse, and makes you aspire
To lift your thoughts up and well out of Earth's mire !
A book's like a swallow that sails on swift wings,
Made of bright shining thoughts, and sighs, and such things—
Sails out on the ocean of dreams and of prayers
That are uttered and felt by each person who shares
The secrets of fairies—or hears, thinks and dares !

Mrs. Hough has had a happy life and is happy in telling about it in her poems. History tells us that she has lived through many unforgetable experiences. As a telegraph operator in pioneer Texas : as the wife (now widow) of Colonel Ira Duane Hough, genius of the Signal Corps in World War I ; as the founder and organiser of the League of American Pen Women, the Poetry Circle and the Allied Arts Club (Brooklyn, N.Y.) Let us learn what so great a figure as Abraham Lincoln meant to Mrs. Hough :

What has Lincoln meant to me ?
Patience, equanimity ;
Willingness to serve each day
In a simple, humble way.

What does Lincoln mean to me ?
Steadfast, faith fidelity ;
Readiness to help the man
Who had failed to understand.

What can Lincoln mean to me ?
Only one thing need I see :

Heart of Love, that gained its peace
Helping children's joy increase.

What will Lincoln mean to me ?
Down the years that are to be ?
Listening for the voice of God—
Leaning on His staff and rod.

We find a striking sonnet, "Silence," from which we quote :

The veil that hangs so silently before us,
And never even seems to know a breeze—
If that thin veil should ever part, a chorus
Of most angelic song would find release ! . . . . .

The Truth of God has brought God's peace within
The misty veil that on the skyline shimmers,
And always seems to close the Pearly Gates—
Will ever dim celestial light that glimmers,
While mortal man his higher vision waits.

It is uncommon to find two sisters so gifted in the service of the same art, poetry, as in *A Wreath for Melpomene,* by Miss Elizabeth and Florence Roberts (Banner Press, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia). The foreword to this volume is written by Lucia Trent and Ralph Cheyney, Litt.D., two valiant contributors to song.

Quoting from the foreword :

"Their heritage of song runs straight back to their earliest ancester in this country, the Reverend Abraham Pierson, father of the first President of Yale University and founder of several Connecticut and New Jersey towns including Newark . . . . no wonder patriotism flows singing in their blood."

It is interesting to know that the proceeds of sale of book are being donated to British War Relief Society.

Striking we find Miss Florence Cecilla Roberts' poem entitled "The People to the Professors." :

You who with an easy air
The torch of learning onward bear,
The while you leisurely explore
To many strange and pleasant shore ;
Who, equably, with facile mind,
The subtly hidden secrets find
Of rocks, of rivers, and of trees,
And ponder the cartography
Of bird and butterfly and bee—
Oh, we have no need for these !
But tell us ! But tell us ! If you know,
Into what land swing the gates of death
To what dark sea these floods of passion flow,
From what hid moor blows this quiet breath ?

From the poetry of Miss Elizabeth we give "Granite Hands" :

The great granite hands of the mountain
Hold so gently such fragile things ;
Aspens and wild roses,
Shy deer and timid rabbits,

Tiny chipmunks and little birds,
The thin veil of falling waters,
The whisper of wind through the pines,
Mist and sunset colors,
And shifting cloud shadows.
Strong hands were built for shelter.

A letter brings us word that Miss Elizabeth, in writing poetry, attempts to hold "the very fleeting glimpse which a flash of inspiration gives one into the sane, orderly and utterly beautiful of reality."

Miss Florence tells us, "my own common-place answer is that for me poetry was primarily an emotional outlet and, secondarily, during the past few controversial years —a means of attempting to persuade the reader to my point of view."

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

EVENING AFTER THE RAIN

THE rain has ceased. In undecided mood
The sombre-skirted clouds pass slowly by.
Leaning to touch with meditative hand
The lake wherein their soft reflections lie

It is a time of stillness and of growth,
Of slow fruition in a world forgot.
Enchanter's nightshade sleeps along the shore
In flowery tangle of forget-me-not . . . .

A time it is when sunshy creatures come
Into a dusky splendour of their own,
When creviced lichen gleams within the wall
And wavering moth alights on fresh washed stone.

Then may you see a crimson spider couched,
(Ruby in rare design of diamonds set)
Photuris' tiny lanterns drift and dance . . . .
And wear that memory for an amulet.

The trunks of trees are wet and dark and spare,
Yet gay withal in summer's dress arrayed,
Like lean shanked monks at festival who march
In ceremonial pomp and slow parade.

So goes the day! No glow in the west relieves
The grey reflections in the fading pond,
Till all is still and all the lights are low
As if the great Magician waved his wand.

J. J. BENTLEY.

TO THE EDITOR

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF POETRY

The correspondence which has burdened your pages for some time past on the above subject seems to have got itself as far as a consideration of details of constitution without much protest having been made against what is, *au fond,* an entirely misconceived view of how the cause of poetry may be served. The references in the correspondence to the Royal Academy of painting suggest that the sponsors of R.A.P. have adopted the view that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, without a care as to whether sauce is good for either.

The Burlington House affair has in view of many excellent judges operated generally towards a standardisation and an unprogressiveness which has aroused the bitterest schisms in the painting world. Jealousies and intrigue are created by their practice of bestowing academic titles, to the winning of which Art itself at times has been subordinated. To be an R.A. after all means a market with those people who buy their pictures for the name on the canvas, and not all artists are indifferent to financial considerations.

Such associations, often formed with the proper motive, the furtherance of art, inevitably become battlegrounds for the furtherance of the individual. Must the spirit of competition invade all the sacred places ? Must the shyest beauties of the spirit, the fleeting inspiration, the tender emotion, the humble joy in self-created beauty which distinguish the true poet, be scorched in the hot breath of jealous rivalry or lost in a vulgar effort to climb an academic tree ?

Do not the protagonists of this scheme know how early many promising poets have been wrecked by their own self-conscious pride, how many have been ruined by overpraise in the press or by uncritical friends ? Mankind is, in the main, defenceless against flattery and is poisoned by it, and no flattery can be so deadly as premature publication through a misguided impulse to encourage. Let the poet mature by surmounting his historic tribulations and disappointments. They will do him no harm and his work much good.

If the world is cold to the poet it is, no doubt, because the poet's voice does not ring to-day with the authentic beauty of the past. Don't blame the public, and seek for means to cozen it ! Nothing will alter things but better poetry, and the mistake the advocates of R.A.P. are making is, I think, their confusion of poetry with poets.

I hold there are two main reasons for the decline in the popularity of poetry. The first, is the infliction on the public of masses of poor stuff by purchased publication, and the second, the fact that modern conditions with their intensified emphasis on success, have proved too much for most artists, whereby they have come to be themselves greater than their art. This is, I think, the reason why so much verse written nowadays is self-conscious and incapable of arousing that responsive emotion in the breast of the reader, which is the sole justification for poetry. This fault is not by any means absent from the work of our most publicised poets.

The essential concomitant of great work is modesty and a carelessness of fame. If one would emulate the great ones it is necessary to be as obscure as a Shakespeare, whose life is already legendary, so little is truly known of it. The authorship of his works even is in dispute, which argues some distaste on someone's part for publicity. This is the attitude to foster if you would help poetry, for those that entertain ambition have admitted into their souls a rival to their art and must abandon hope of greatness.

You will never regiment the imponderable. There are some things that must be free as air, free even from kindly influences. These are the higher things which must work out a lonely salvation without help or direction, reward or recognition. To admit outside influence is to caress the bloom of a peach with sandpaper. Poets are the mouthpieces of a force greater than themselves and should be humbly grateful for that

distinction, seeking no other. Poetry is too delicate for slaps on the back. There must be no pressures either from the excitation of the poet's ego or from any necessity, by tempting him with publication, to conform to standards other than his own.

Let us glance however at the practical difficulties that confront this scheme. Those who draw encouragement from Burlington House overlook the difference between poetry and paint. The painter can at least hold an exhibition with an attendant to whisper prices. It is a most high-toned market, no doubt, but I cannot believe the market place will ever breed great art. What else does the Royal Academy do for painters ? It sets them busily to work to paint canvases which are designed to catch the eyes of the selectors whose prejudices are known, painting as it were to a syllabus and for an examination ! Truly no service to what should be free and incalculable.

But, of course, poets can hang no sonnets on a wall. The R.A.P. proposal is to bring out a magnificent Christmas number containing all that has passed the selection committee. The names for this, quoted by Mr. Leaver, so various and mutually incompatible, will presumably by some alchemy speak with a collective mind. The bigwigs of Burlington House can do this of course. After 174 years they are more or less standardised, having all been through the same old mill ; but poetry is, or should be, a sublimer thing, and our suggested selectors are not regimented, their feet have not been bound, chinese fashion, but plumed we hope. Agreement and cohesion between them seems a rather optimistic dream.

That any poet should have to conform to the standards of others is upon any long view of poetry, highly objectionable. Publicity is not so desirable for those whose voices should cry in the wilderness. Posterity will take every care of good work. Poets that posterity will be concerned with need no aid from us, those that it will ignore need not concern us either.

I do not think R.A.P. is a practical thing. Its finance is unconvincing. The proposal is to sell poems by unknown people in a seller's market and balance accounts. It cannot be done, it has never been done. As a novelty it might succeed once or twice, but as a regular thing I take leave to entertain the gravest doubt.

In conclusion, I would remind these R.A.P. enthusiasts that *Poetry of To-day* and POETRY REVIEW publish during the year a very great deal of new verse. These magazines are both heavily subsidised ; they have to be. The Poetry Society, which controls them both, is completely impartial and concerned only with the quality of these poems. What more could the publication enthusiast wish for ? Let me make a plea. If it is really thought desirable to rush even more people into print let us work hard to enlarge and extend The Poetry Society, so that it is a power in the land, and attracts by its own gravitional force all that is best in our beloved world.

Twickenham, October 2nd. H. W. HARDING.

WHITHER POETRY ?

Two the letters in your September-October number pleased me. I refer to one under "The Two Alans," by H. W. Harding, and the other under "Whither Poetry," by E. Curt Peters. These letters pleased me because they prove that I am not alone in my deep resentment of much of the hocus-pocus that is being foistered upon us as poetry. One longs for the pen of a Macaulay to sweep away some of the nonsense and obscurity by the application of a little sound common-sense.

In a newly-awakened desire to learn something of modern poetry I was referred to the work of one Ezra Pound. Sir, it entirely passes my comprehension how rational human beings can even *pretend* to get any satisfaction out of the subconscious effluvia of a distorted mind, set down without the slightest regard to rhyme or reason. Nor is Ezra Pound alone in his incoherence ! There are, alas, many such, and ever will be,

so long as they are encouraged by such a representative body as that which has the privilege of publishing THE POETRY REVIEW.

It would not be difficult to quote many instances of this nonsensical obscurantism. I should hate to offend the author of "Repentance," which appears on page 297 of the present issue. This, however, is a typical instance of the thing about which I am complaining. I am (I hope), gifted with an average amount of common-sense, but although I have read this rhyme many times I fail entirely to discover what the author is getting at. The retort may well be made that it requires a special sense to appreciate work of that type, to which my reply would be "Then, it is not poetry!"

"The Unknown Country" (page 289), where some sixty words are punctuated by a single comma and full-stop is again, to my mind, another of those attempts concerning which, an able critic wrote "There are words . . . which when disposed in certain orders and combinations, have made, and will again make, good poetry," but why, Oh why, Mr. Editor must we suffer these inflictions? In short, sir, will some kind friend take pity on me and indicate what it is that I lack in not being able to discover any poetry in rhymes and free verse of the types indicated?

Tanworth-in-Arden. FRED BARLOW.

"THE TWO ALANS"

May I venture to enter a protest against Mr. Harding's criticism, in the September-October POETRY REVIEW, of two poems published in the previous number? I do not presume to be a judge of modern poetry, for, as I belong to a past generation, its technique is alien to me; but I can appreciate beauty when I see it, even in an unfamiliar form, and to me it seems that Mr. Alan Scott's poem, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," has true beauty. Mr. Harding sums it up as belonging to the "Guts and Blood School"; but this pronouncement gives rather a false impression. The poet (if I read him aright) has emphasised the ghastly details of the battlefield to show forth more vividly the beauty of the human spirit that rises above them, "quite free to float," even as the divine beauty of Christ shines triumphant through the Agony of the Cross. Christ "died not in vain," since the power of His atoning grace reaches not only to the cloistered life, but even in "the battle's bloody drain: the whirling Hellish hole that sucks the body down," the soul of man, inspired by the vision of that supreme self-sacrifice, can rise above the carnage, and "in vicious wounds of clotted clay; in twisted tank; through ruptured air—to-day—find God." To me this short poem of fourteen lines seems to have two attibutes of a great poem, beauty and strength.

Mr. Alan Rook's poem, "Village at War," does not aim at spiritual exaltation, but at painting a realistic picture; and succeeds admirably in portraying the desolation of such a scene. Mr. Harding comments on the lines "Between the banks of the pavement," and awaits someone to divulge their meaning to him. To me they suggest the deserted street, running like a river between its banks of rubble-heaped pavement on either side.

I apologize to Mr. Harding for venturing to criticize his criticism; but when a poem has given one real pleasure it is only common gratitude to seek to defend it against attack!

Cheltenham, October 1st. EVA DOBELL.

Alas! my poems are too true—
(They make some people faint!)
I must then take my pencil blue,
Cross out the words of ruddy hue
And eau-de-cologne the taint!

And *never* must I hint that God
Would leave His fleecy cloud
To walk through blood and blazing sod
Where studded boots, and tractors trod—
Oh! *no*—it's not allowed!!

Perhaps my vision is quite wrong,
My eyes did never see it!
Hey-nonny!—now just hear my song—
Anaemic, lovely lilting song,
There is no Blood, no Death, no Wrong—
How nice it is to free it!

Now that we're all nice pale people
Come listen to my golden trills,
Come, ye lovely, flower-like people,
Gather ye round my lofty steeple—
I'll drop ye pink, poetic pills . . . . .

It seems unfortunate that I lost both my rose-tinted spectacles *and* my diminishing telescope when I wrote: "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," for it seems that Death on-the-battlefield won't bear looking at without them!

Such "anatomy of thought" must, therefore, appear disgusting to a person whose eyes, perhaps, are more self-disciplined to the green of flowers than the green of gangrene. The curious part of it is, however, they are each a product of Nature and, to me, appear equally green. Poets must see All—"Where there is no vision the people perish." I wonder if Death would express so exactly his theme if he were covered with shiny pink flesh and if, instead of a scythe, he carried a butterfly net . . . I wonder! Why then must poetry (which is accepted as one of the strongest mediums of expression) be expected everlastingly to dip its themes into the rainbow's "pot of gold"?

To conclude, to imagine that God confines Himself only to the "lily-white"—and in particular, to lily-white death-beds, is to accuse Him of being a coward! It is just as ridiculous and as far from Life and Love to assume that Christ, when, and because he was a baby, never hiccoughed!

L-Sergt., R.A., October 14th. ALAN SCOTT.

A NEW VOCABULARY?

In the last issue of THE POETRY REVIEW I read with much sympathy the pathetic little poem by D. R. W. Carr, entitled "Words." "Dulled by misuse and use," said the writer, "words no longer sing." This is the old old story of course, not without a very fair measure of justification either. Nevertheless, so might the artist accuse the colours on his palette for his own failure to produce a beautiful picture. Or, shall we say, after like manner, so might the sculptor complain in despair of expressing his own heart's hidden dream as he contemplates with loathing his own material—a shapeless ugly lump of stone. In his poem, Mr. Carr avers conditions will be different in future years. Then, in "another world of words of newly-minted gold," the poor poet will stand a really decent chance. I doubt it. Whatever the nature and quality of his material it still remains that "Without the Vision the poets, as well as the people, perish." All true art is, and ever will be, conflict—conflict of the psychic with the unl vely material, but a conflict unto triumph, not unto despair. Mr. Carr's hope of "another world of newly-minted words in future years," is just a brain-sickly dream, altogether futile and born of despondency. Certainly it is not very encouraging to the

younger generation of dreamers of dreams who have yet, with no better luck than Mr. Carr's, to express themselves.

Brightlingsea, October 15th. ERNEST J. BRYANT.

A TESTAMENT OF NATIONAL FAITH

The Saviours, by Clemence Dane (Heinemann), is a radio play septenante touching the peaks of English history from the dawn of our civilisation to the barbarism of the present day. It is a lovely book in which you will meet the chivalry of England and see the sparks of patriotism flash among the hills of Wales, in the Forest of Anderida, the Elizabethan Court and departments of Whitehall.

In defining their own creations writers are chary of using the word poetry, and Miss Dane is modestly content with the understatement that her tale is told in a mixture of prose and verse.

I opened this book in a Green Line bus, surrounded by a brawl of babies; soldiers returning from leave; munitioners and queue-weary women. It was not, one would say, a promising atmosphere in which to find true romance. Through one of the windows, beneath a notice which told how the service would be withdrawn at the end of the month, I saw a pony trap of great antiquity, which, likely enough, has travelled that same road when the girl Victoria came to the throne. From the dusty dusty recesses of some old coach house it had been brought back into service. The doors of yesterday had been opened to make way for it, for the world was running backwards and petrol-vanquished distances were to become remote again. For mine especial safety most of the window was blotted out with gauze, and all that could be seen through square of glass remaining was a symbol of the past trotting towards me. When it was gone I turned to my book and was transported to the Vale of Avalon.

In these grey and murderous days, where the future is fog and only the past is clear, it is good to be reminded of the nation's soul. The great heart of England beats on every page of *The Saviours.* It is a testament of the faith that has moved and will move mountains. I shall not readily forget that golden ride on a Green Line bus, in which was revealed the heart of our mystery.

For her subjects, Miss Dane has chosen the children's milestones of history —Arthur, Alfred, Robin Hood, Elizabeth, Nelson—has scraped the lichen from their gravestones and brought them out of memory into sight. For us she has re-burnished the great sword Calibur, and banked again the fire that cindered Alfred's cakes. She has re-strung Robin's bow and quickened with life the stilled heart of Elizabeth of England.

No lover of this island could read *The Saviours* without being the better for it. Miss Dane understands the magic of words for, at her bidding, they dance or fly like blown leaves, thunder as a cataract and sing to music of their own setting. It is rare for any artist to command so wide field of human expression. She can make power and beauty walk hand in hand along the pathway of a single sentence.

A few days ago I saw a tank come roaring down a country lane. Perched on the monster's back was a young soldier and, as it rattled by, I saw him snatch from the hedgerow a spray of honeysuckle to put in his cap. Miss Dane is always doing that.

ROLAND PERTWEE.

I wish I could tell Mary English how much her "Embarkation Leave" has comforted me lately. It is so wonderful to have THE POETRY REVIEW still coming, there is always something in it that one needs.

VIOLET A. HOBSON, Duncan, Vancouver Island.

THE POETS TO SHAKESPEARE

WE who know herbs of sorrow in our day,
Now humbly gather April blooms for you—
The fragrant gilliflower, a blackthorn spray
Of snowy lace, cool primrose, speedwell blue,
The daffodil of happy memory,
Deep violet, with green to bind the strand:
Frail buds of mirth and flowers of tragedy
We offer, knowing you will understand
The sharpest thorn does bear a rose of joy,
That we who falter in your steps long gone
Must find in gold of life a dark alloy:
Our homage with this garland passing on,
The poets of to-day a promise give,
That song will not be silent, song will live.

GLADYS HUNKIN.

WAITING . . . .

Your scent still hovers in the settled air of dawn
With all its haunting fragrance on my cheek.
The quiet carpet wears your footprints, cold now, as it has worn
Them through the waiting week.

As treads the slow-march in the wake of Death's procession,
Deep muffled drum-beats clutching at the breath,
Each wary footstep, that lingers, is a mute expression
Of the nearness of Death.

A strangeness broods around: no laughter echoes in the room
Resilient once to youthful happiness.
The walls that have reflected life seem now to consume
It back . . . but yield distress.

The quiet angels, watchful in the upper air, hang down
A curtain from the windows of the moon;
And spread it softly, low, across the sleeping town,
Lest it wake too soon.

An ectoplasmic aura, strangely glowing, hangs above,
A lake of light where watchful phantoms float,
Focussing to fluorescence a nucleus of love
From hearts that beat remote.

Here must I wait for life's renewal, where no life is left,
Nor share as yet the burden of the hour.
The clock-hands turn, of all significance bereft,
And the dawn has lost its power.

F/Lt., S. Rhodesia. R. L. PORTEOUS.

THE ZINNIA AND THE OAK

Were I asked to define a major poet, I would say he is one who combines a true sense of values with poetic insight and an original verbal gift; a minor poet may have one but not both of these. When one is trying to assess the significance of the work of several unfamiliar writers, it is not a bad idea to start by asking oneself—into what is this likely to develop? Are the seeds from which great creative work may spring in this packet, or are they of a lesser sort? Will it produce a zinnia—or an oak?

Anthologies cannot serve as more than introductions. New writers are best served by limited and reasonably priced individual collections, such as the half-crown series of "New Poets" sponsored by Messrs. Routledge, the first four of which (Keidrych Rhys, John Heath-Stubbs, Alan Rook and Sidney Keyes) were reviewed in the September POETRY REVIEW. Four more have now appeared.

The most individual is *Beauty For Ashes,* by a hitherto unpublished poet, Morwenna Donnelly. It is a single long poem, an allegory centring round the quest of the good. In it a deep vein of Celtic mysticism is blent with a warm and vivid imagination and beautiful natural descriptions, such as:

> . . . . yesterday
> . . . a wind wild with brown leaves, cloud-shredded under blue domes
> Where birds are swirled, wilder and browner in their wind bodies,
> Leaf-winged, falling precisely aslant the furrow, or on bough
> Wind-swayed . . . . .
> And to-day as I, Peregrine, walk the fields, quietly
> October falls, delving as softly into earth as June on a warm day;
> No wind, but shadows moving in a great swirl of sea, stealing
> The fields under the white crown-toppling clouds.

The poem is printed lengthways across the page to a oid breaking the long line. Man is presented as a trinity: Peregrine the boy, Cucogry his soul, and Lughaidh, his spirit. There are lovely and memorable passages all through:

> . . . . And those days
> I knew how to be born in the curled-up frond of an unfolding leaf,
> And stars and perfume were my body, n ither had I any soul
> More solemn than a shred of dream. But now my origin is nought,
> And bare and naked I am come to town, to find my name,
> My place, the house from which I started, and a faith.

And this, the child Peregrine:

> . . . The vein of a leaf
> Was troubled with my life, and the same love and passion shaped
> My bones that was in the Spring and the rose, for the secret
> Of children is unity; they are not separate; they keep the silence of beauty
> Unburdened, seeking no voice within themselves.

The other three volumes appear at first sight to be rather similar to each other, but individuality soon emerges. Alex Comfort in *A Wreath for the Living* stands out from the other two as not being dominated by war themes—he is presumably still a civilian whereas the other two are serving in the Army. Even his "Letter to a Friend in the Army" has a slightly cold detachment:

> . . . . . have you already
> killed with the pack, and can you
> march with the band?

The poetry is certainly not in the pity. There is a similar detachment in his memorial poem for Stefan Zweig "The Orioles"; the "Elegy for a Girl Dead in an Air Raid" seems to set out Comfort's attitude very well, showing both his weakness and his strength, which lies away from simple humanity in a more permanently poetic region,

sometimes that of the dream and nightmare, in which personification plays a great part. He knows how to use words and his technical skill is considerable, as in :

Sleep in this land, this tomb—
do not you, o watcher, seek to recover
seas that are not the same
nor can be ever.
Follow no more the harbour
mistrust the gull whom the wind snatches
over your head, whose laughter
blows on the marshes.

J. F. Hendry in *The Bombed Happiness* divides the contents into "Landscapes" and "War," but they are war landscapes. "He is a Scotsman at present serving in the Army, was teaching in the Balkans before the War and is a student of sociology and anthropology." This is rather what one would expect, for there is present a strong element of slightly artificial intellectuality, but there is also a genuine poetic impulse, and both dignity and simplicity. "Churchillian Ode" seems to be representative ; this is good artificial poetry as distinct from natural, without using "artificial" in any derogatory sense.

Though all the air is calamitous with weeping, O Hitler,
Silt of your wreckage, an ambition's debacle, and the debris
Piles insanity upon insanity too torn for the mind to understand—
Yet I hear our horns at sea blare troopships.
I listen where whispers of victory drown the sirens of anguish,
And through the fog of murderous dreams
Drifting up, acrid and brown, I see the merciful
Miraculous dissolution of bombast and lust, in an elemental Marlborough.

In Emanuel Litvinoff's *The Untried Soldier* there is no doubt of the pity. This is possibly less subtle poetry, but there is a simple straightforward emotion which misses any embarassing lack of restraint, attaining a happy medium between the obvious and the obscure, as from "Nightmare Over Euston" :

And once again back to the recurring dream,
The shadows are the same—a train pointing darkwards,
Death in a soldier's face, the woman strained and wild,
war and bewilderment in a mother's kiss ; . . . . . .
Now you, my one bright ray of Light, are fading.
The hands move on so fast, so fast—
Where are your eyes, my dearest, let me see them
calm and steady ? time cannot tear a look apart.
The hands move faster, you are waving.
You are England weeping in the dark—
dearest, where are you ?

Mr. Litvinoff is profoundly influenced by the war and his conditions of living. (He is serving in the Pioneer Corps). But he has maintained a sense of proportion and an accurate scale of values, so that his philosophy, sombre, tragic, prophetic as it is, has clarity and a firm basis. There is an elemental quality about his work, exempl fied in these lines :

I do not see but sense truth in all agony.
Such twisted landmarks point, no doubt,
a way to heaven ;

I do not know.
All I know, I *know* one day
we shall return.

Of these last four poets, Litvinoff and Miss Donelly seem to hold out the most promise—always provided the latter does not retreat too far into a dream land of her own, away from the simple and real.

The Fire, by C. Denis Pegge (Williams and Norgate, 1s. 6d.) has some pleasant natural observation, as in his description of a glen stained with peat water. There have lately been a number of books of verse by airman, from *Verses of a Fighter Pilot,* to *War Sonnets and Others* (A. V. Phillips, Hodder & Stoughton, 2s. 6d.) and *To What End is the Dawn* ? by Flt.-Lt. C. R. Sanderson (W. Heffer & Sons, 2s. 6d.). The first of the latter two owes no debt to modernism ; it even makes use of "thee" and "o'er." The sonnet form is an exacting one and seldom to be recommended for use throughout an entire volume. "To What End" has some pleasant pieces, but betrays traces of a somewhat muddled philosophy. What is surprising is that there is on the whole so little feeling of the immensity and mystery of space in these poems, none of the atmosphere of the clear cold blue heights where no dross is left and only the elemental shape of thought remains—the atmosphere De St. Exupéry achieves in the realm of prose in "Wind, Rain and Stars." Mr. Sanderson does feel towards this a little in :

I have looked over the edge of the world
And seen beyond the fire of the sun,
I have found in space so clearly unfurled
The mystery that everything is one.

But, taken as a whole, the R.A.F. poets have not produced much that is distinctively their own.

Work which is presented in dialect form is apt to be limited in its appeal. The process of unravelling unfamiliar forms of speech may so easily exhaust or divert the interest so that all appetite is lost. This happens to a good many people when they wrestle with work like some of Hugh McDiarmid's Scots poems, but occasionally a book emerges successfully from these limitations, such as Kate Rennie Archer's *Call Frae the Heather* (Eucalyptus Press, Mills College, California). The paper and general format are so good that it is a pleasure to handle it, and the contents are full of delicate observation and good sense, with a downright, individual Scots humour and charm. There is also considerable artistry of form. "Is It There Yet ?" is an example of Mrs. Archer's style :

I wunner if the Highland herds are grazin' on the hill,
I wunner if the cuckoos call alang Ben Voirlich still ;
I wunner if the whaups hae nestit yet, amang the peat,
Or if the peesweep's cry at nicht is still sae sadly sweet.
I wunner if the sax beeskeps stan' yet aside hame walls,
I wunner if the Ayrshire kye moo saftly in the stalls ;
I wunner gin the burnie wimples by the cottage yet,
I wunner if . . . . . while I hae min' . . . . . the folk at hame forget !

Another book of Mrs. Archer's also to hand, *Petals of the Guelder Rose* (Gillick Press, Berkley, California) consists mainly of love poems. Some are too abstract to be quite a success, but the more concrete ones have a universal appeal because they present some simple and definite aspect of the relationship between two people. This second book is less good than *Call Frae the Heather,* because it is much less individual and varied.

Prose Poems: A Further Note to "Cornerstones of Verse"

In the July Poetry Review, Richard Garratt names the qualities of a good poem as "the art of extracting drama from the ordinary and semi-ordinary, the luscious brilliance of verbal usage which makes every line a climax unto itself and, behind everything, an incidental music which is physical almost as much as it is intellectual." There can be no difference between many of the prose passages collected in *The Homing of the Winds* (Faber, 3s. 6d.), from various prose works of Sacheverell Sitwell, and actual poems, for they have all these qualities.

Mr. Sitwell is superbly the Baroque. Treating of the hot brilliant welter of the tropics he is entirely at home. Describing the Creoles of Martinique and Guadeloupe, with their cotton turbans, "It is no longer the crocus or the tulip turban, but the horned pheasant, a crested head, an egret, a golden crane . . . ." Through dilution of their blood "a new type has been formed . . . . It is born of the winds and waters, and is sister to the flowers and to the exotic blossoms on the branches. In synonym, it is light coffee, or the milk of cocoa, not whipped to a froth and sipped up through a reed, as the feathered Aztecs drank it: nor the soconusco, burnt brown with cinnamon: but this is pale like milk . . . like the magnolia petal: and, like the mule pink, shows its crosses."

A sun-ripened flavour creeps into his treatment of any subject: the *fete champetre* of the white nuns becomes as warmly lovely as the South Sea girls of whom he says: "as the air dried the spray upon them, their burnt and nectarine colour came back." "No nun could sleep on such a day as this. They sit at the pine tree's foot . . . .A warm breath, hot with resin, glaucous, dropping with the perfumed sap or gum, plays in the sighing, but now silent, boughs. It is as scented as the East, more warmly perfumed, more arombsial, because the whole pinewood is a sleeping animal." The range of these pieces is extraordinary—from the Danube Delta to the Elysian Fields, and to the Souks of Fez. "When the sun came, the colours were renewed . . . to fires of glass." This book will do the same for the greyest December train journey.

Introducing James Joyce (Faber, 3s. 6d.), presents extracts from *The Dubliners, Portrait of Artist as Young Man, Ulysses,* and *Finnegan's Wake,* chosen by T. S. Eliot and introduced in a short explanatory passage. It is unfortunate that the cumulative effect is retrogressive rather than progressive, at least as far as general comprehensibility is concerned. The reasonably unbiased and intelligent reader is overwhelmed by a nauseous flood of vaguely pornographic nonsense. If, as Mr. Eliot says, "*Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* are too closely constructed, and depend too much on cumulative effect, for any extracts to be more than those points easiest to grasp in isolation"—then what a formidable effort would be required to consume the whole dish!

Anthologies of Two Continents

Surrealism—the imagery of dream and the unconscious—is justified in the realm of fantastic humour or of pure beauty: never when allied to the philosophical. No theory of philosophy, however outré, can be expressed in such terms. This is possibly why such poems as Nicholas Moore's "The Horses, the Girls, the Circuses," which is included in *The Fortune Anthology* (Fortune Press, 6s.) fail to satisfy completely. I find the work of Moore interesting up to a point, beyond which it so often just fails to carry the reader. The poem "The Lesson," included in the July-August Poetry Review, is an example of the almost very-good. There is much pure beauty, but somehow the deeper approach is not convincing, though in this particular poem there is less philosophy and greater success. Compare the classic example of justified surrealism, De La Mare's "Peacock Pie," where pure beauty and fantasy are perfectly

combined. *The Fortune Anthology* combines the work of known and unknown Englishmen with that of two Americans, Wallace Stevens and Conrad Aiken. "Three Poems of the Last War" by Osbert Sitwell are a brilliant and telling indictment, as true to-day as when they were written in 1918-19—which would seem to indicate that progress between the two wars has been small.

Four young officers contribute to *Poets In Battledress* (Fortune Press, 5s.). "R.I.P." by Robin Benn has genuine feeling, and the second contributor, Denis Birch, has made a gallant effort with a memorable theme in "Infantrymen's Rhapsody"—but he has not yet the art to handle it perfectly. Robert Smith gives a graceful and accomplished rendering of Verlaine's "Chanson d'Automne," and the fourth poet, Alan White, shows much promise.

The third collection—*Princeton Verse, Between Two Wars,* edited by Allen Tate (by Humphrey Milford, 15s. 6d.) is the best, because it achieves an order and unity of its own; quieter, but more sustained. It contains work by men who have been at Princeton University between 1921 and the present day, and includes such known poets as Ronald Bottrall and A. F. MacLeish, besides contemporary undergraduates. The vivid portraits and "human situation" poems which are so great a feature of present American verse are well represented. George M yberry's "To My Father in Heaven" is good, as is R. L. Howe's "I woke from Middle Sleep"—In "Schön War die Nacht," Richard M. Morse has made an interesting experiment, and Theodore Spencer has telling satire, especially "Escapist's Song." This volume is a very representative selection of recent American trends.

M. Edgelow.

AN AMERICAN AND THE MOST PLAUSIBLE ANSWERS

An enterprising new publisher, Russell Clarke, has just produced a pamphlet of poems by John Bayliss, Charles Hamblett, Alun Lewis, and Emanuel Litvinoff (*Call Wind to Witness,* 1s.), a Quartet of Romantic Poets, as its introducer, Derek Stanford says. It is pleasantly produced with great red capital letters at the beginning of each poem, and I suppose it is worth its shilling, if only because so courageous a publication deserves support. But its format and its first few poems are unfortunately not upheld by the rest of the contents.

Mr. Stanford writes that "In the case of Alun Lewis, the poetry is in the pity, and the pleading ghost of Wilfrid Owen is heard," and—since he is an intelligent critic—it would seem that he is unconsciously taking up the position of devil's advocate. By the same analogy, Emanuel Litvinoff might, I suggest, be called the ghost of Isaac Rosenberg. So much ghost-writing is unfortunate, but perhaps not so unfortunate as the ghost-writing of Charles Hamblett, whose ghost is patently the still-living Dylan Thomas: needless to say none of these ghosts write with quite the elan of their living images.

> "Finding the middle muddle in struck night
> Twiddling the thunder's bolt and burnt light
> I, Thoth, make prophecy
> Of milked strength for your postnatal tree."

is not even an engaging piece of rubbish. Were it meant as a parody of Dylan Thomas and not as a serious piece of writing, it would be a bad parody. Since it is presumably serious, its effect is even more devastating. Messrs. Litvinoff and Lewis, ghosts though they be, are a very different matter to this. Their ghostliness is a matter of accent rather than idea. They speak with the same voices as their forerunners of the previous

Great War, but, being contemporary, say different things. However, their poetry depends very much on what they say, and not on how they say it. They are very consciously intent upon, in Mr. Stanford's phrase, recording "the age at its turn." That is to say, they are striving consciously to "get" the right mood to appeal to their contemporaries, to say the "right" things to touch off the present. Needless to say, they succeed pretty well, but both their aim and their result have nothing very much to do with poetry. Their sentiments are admirably expressed clichés in verse, and easily pass for poems : in time of war I see no reason why they should not attain and deserve a large public—a public that is more interested in topical (but serious) verse than in poetry. Mr. Lewis's poem "Infantry" in this pamphlet is, for instance, an admirable cameo. Mr. Litvinoff's verse is a little more reflective, and less solely descriptive, and therefore may appeal slightly less easily. Of course, there is no reason why these young writers should not write first-rate poetry in the future, but then there seems no particular reason why they should, and Mr. Lewis has already shown himself a much better short-story writer than poet. John Bayliss is perhaps the only one of these poets who is not a ghost. He has something that the others have not got, and something essential to the writing of good poetry—imagination. I am not going here to argue at length the subtle distinctions between kinds and qualities of imagination : it has been done before : one kind of imagination has been called "fancy." But since it may be said that Alun Lewis must have imagination to be able to "get" so well the correct atmosphere in his poem "Infantry," I would say just this, that such imagination is not particularly the property of the poet, that a trained novelist of even inferior quality can usually "get" his characters and scenes in such a way. When I use imagination as a word denoting poetic quality I mean something less easily attainable than that. Of course poetry is dependent a great deal on practi e and hard work, but no amount of practise and hard work, no amount of ideas will enable you to write good poetry, unless you have in you the feeling for it : just as no amount of training in any job will compensate for a lack of natural aptitude in it. So, though Messrs. Litvinoff and Lewis, and writers of their kind, give the most plausible answers to the question "where are our war-poets ?" it is in fact probably not they who will be considered to have done so by future generations. However, they always may develop in new directions, as may Mr. Hamblett, and perhaps it is not entirely a bad thing that he should be seeking to enrich his vocabulary—even at the expense of Dylan Thomas. Mr. Bayliss's poem "Seven Dreams" is most interesting, and will perhaps repay your shilling.

Wallace Stevens, who has just had a new book published in America (*Parts of a World,* Knopf, N.Y.), is in stature something very different from any of the foregoing. He is almost, if not quite, a great poet, as Yeats was, and as perhaps Eliot is, and it is a crying disgrace that his work is not published in this country. It is of peculiar interest, not only because of its quality, but because of the peculiar humours and rhetorics that go to make it. It is an almost excessively civilized poetry, and—another point of interest —if it can be classified at all, it must be described as symbolist poetry. Like Yeats in his age, Stevens in his, goes on from strength to strength, and his latest volume has as much good in it as his first, *Harmonium,* which was first published in the early twenties, when he was thirty-five. Still, to-day his writing is more adequate to meet any situation and any time than that of most of his contemporaries or juniors.

"It is equal to living in a tragic land
To live in a tragic time."

Those who are interested in fine poetry, let alone in its manners and styles, would do well to get his books, even though they have to wait their arrival from America.

NICHOLAS MOORE.

THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

Our Premium is divided with pleasure between two contributors, each of whom sends a selection of praiseworthy poems of very varying style. One is JOHN KENNEDY, of Newport, Mon., the other is H. W. HARDING, who is already favourably known to the Society.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Vere Arnot, Walton ;
Dorothy Birch, Bournemouth ;
Alice Collinge, Bolton ;
E. Denham, Birmingham ;
Barbara Drummond, Winchester ;
I. H. Lewis, Leatherhead ;
Juanita Peirse, Bath ;
R. McKie, Brighton ;
Arthur Lynndford Smith, Wanstead ;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere ;

COMMENDED

Violet E. Aldis, Lyme Regis ;
C. E. Bangham, Taunton ;
N. K. Cruickshank, Sudbury ;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston ;
Rhoda Cutbrush, Westerham ;
O. C. Dougan, Perth ;
Marguerite Edgelow, Jordans ;
Pauline Emeric, Taplow ;
Frederick Francis, Salford ;
Elsie M. Gittens, Weybridge ;
H. T. Hunt Grubb, Chalfont ;
Oliver Hawksley, Argyll ;
Sarah Henthorn, Oldham ;
Harry Hewitt, Manchester ;
Violet Hobson, Vancouver ;
Ellis Hope, Chepstow ;
D. M. Jonzen, Hornchurch ;
Susanne Knowles, London ;
P. E. Leaver, Ambleside ;
J. Sackville Martin, Leigh ;
Rachel Pettit Martin, Illinois ;
G. E. Merrick, Warminster ;
G. S. Oddy, Ryde ;
Ierne Ormsby, Thurgoland ;
H. Sefton, Lytham ;
W. T. Shorthose, Preston ;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford ;
Bertha M. Skeat, Sedbergh ;
J. Marion Soper,
Lewis Sowden, Johannesburg ;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth ;

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by December 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent). It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author.

The Poetry Society is empowered by the Executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £25 as "The Shirley Carter Leigh Greenwood" Prize for Poetry. Poems entered for this competition, which is open to all, should be addressed to "The Editor, The Poetry Review (Greenwood Premium), 33 Portman Square, W.1.", not later than March 31st next. No conditions with regard to subject or length are imposed. The successful poem will be published in THE POETRY REVIEW.

It is suggested that the relationship between Great Britain and the United States might inspire competitors. The late Mrs. Greenwood was an American by birth, born towards the end of the Civil War, in Richmond, Va., where her father, Mr. Chapman Leigh, was Secretary to General Robert E. Lee, a relation of her mother, and she eventually married an Englishman. Mr. F. C. L. Greenwood, her son, died some years ago at a comparatively early age.

The Year, by Adrienne Gale (Friends Bookshop) is an interesting but depressing experience to read but she has evidently felt deeply, perhaps too deeply, the anxieties and griefs of the present year. There they are at all events, woven through the beauties of nature, which in the main is only permitted to exhibit its sterner aspects or such of them as may be trusted to provide a threat or a warning. The book would have been the better for more of the carefree music of such delightful pieces as "The Sea's Unchosen Lover" and "Still Life." These strike a tender note in sharp contrast to the somewhat bleak Cumbrian atmosphere which seems to prevail. Mrs. Gale is to be congratulated, on the whole, for a thoroughly sound year's work. There is plenty of evidence of a serious preoccupation with the problems that beset us at all times and especially now, and a good measure of skill is shown in presenting her thoughts. She is not perhaps at her best in poems of a philosophic or speculative nature, but these are good. They might have seemed better if she had not thrown them into such sharp relief by giving us the two shafts of sunlight mentioned by their titles above.

We welcome the Favil Press new series, "Poets in the Services," but think, as this is the verse sure of an audience now, more than sixteen crown 8vo pages might be provided or the price be lower than 1s. 6d. per number, and a bid made for a popular general sale. If any new poetry is pertinent now it is here. Our somewhat similar *Soldier Poets* of the last war ran to 96 pages for 1s. 0d.

A number of POETRY REVIEWERS have recently produced small books of verse. The "note of joy" is present in two especially of these—Roberta Shuttleworth and Christmas Humphreys. The former's *In Many Moods* (Williams & Norgate, 3s. 6d.), contains a number of pleasant pieces, several of the best of which were first published in THE POETRY REVIEW. There are some effective character studies, and much sturdy sense and philosophy; but little of the delicate lyricism attributed to the work of women poets. "Out of the Darkness" is a fine poem, if less joyous in mood.

> Noise was a drug to atrophy the sense,
> And sight was the loose hand that led you hence. . .
> But mine shall be the sombreness that bids
> You close those sanguine pleasure-seeking lids
> And contemplate the deeper darkness spread
> Above a myriad sacrificial dead,
> And, thinking, question if another's guilt
> Or yours shall answer for their blood new-spilt. . .

In *Willow Leaves* (Talbot Press, 2s. 6d.), John Irvine offers a collection of lyrics in the early Chinese manner, very reminiscent of Arthur Waley's translations of "The Book of Songs." The Chinese author, Chiang Yee, has written a short foreword in the course of which he says "Poetry is the voice of the human heart, and the poems in this volume have spoken in harmony with my heart in many ways. Chinese poems represent a picture or painting, at the same time expressing a sentiment, and . . . leave much to the imagination." This John Irvine has succeeded in doing, and the book has distinction and delicacy of observation. "Spring is typical in its simplicity of presentation :—

> Day long the merchants sell their silks.
> The spring-delighted swallows pass.
> A child lifts up his hand to catch
> The petals falling on the grass.

A further volume of Mr. Irvine's, *Nocturne* (Orwell Press, Dublin, 2s. 6d.), has some good lyrics with a neat economy of words. The tempo and pitch is slow and quiet, often with a strong tinge of melancholy—the title is an apt one.

In complete contrast to these is Roy Fuller's *The Middle of a War* (Hogarth, 3s. 6d.) Here is vivid stuff, fashioned from the fabric of every day living as we know it in our time. Serving in the Fleet Air Arm, he has taken the emotional experience of the average serviceman and re-created it simply and often very movingly so that every reader sees himself. The titles are suggestive—"ABC of a Naval Trainee," "The End of a Leave," "Waiting to be Drafted," "Y.M.C.A. Writing Room," "Letter to My Wife." These are poems of the human situation, and of actual experience—not of the ivory-towered intellectual. "Royal Naval Air Station" is a good example, moving in its straightforward and genuine emotion.

> The piano, hollow and sentimental, plays,
> And outside, falling in a moonlit haze,
> The rain is endless as the empty days.
> . . . . . .
> And the songs of the minute walk into our ears ;
> Behind the easy words are difficult tears :
> The pain which stabs is dragged out over years.
>
> A ghost has made uneasy every bed.
> *You are not you without me* and *The dead*
> *Only are pleased to be alone* it said.
>
> And hearing it silently the living cry
> To be again themselves, or sleeping try
> To dream it is impossible to die.

The Lakeland Poets (Stockwell, 3s. 6d.) is a remarkable piece of work for a boy of scarcely seventeen—most of it having been written before the author, David Horne, attained that age. It is published posthumously, for David was killed in an accident while climbing Pillar Rock, Ennerdale, in the Lake District. He shows promise of considerable literary gifts ; most of his material here has been used before, but he manages to present it freshly, giving a human and illuminating picture of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, and their relations with and effect on each other, even if he does not offer any specially acute criticism. David Horne won a Foundation Scholarship to Marlborough when only twelve, and in his last summer term was awarded the Congreve Literature Prize. It appears at first a great tragedy that a youth endowed with such gifts should die as he did—but how much better to die doing the thing he loved rather than as he so easily might have, a little later, in war.

Fresh Air, by H. Milville (Stockwell, 1s. 6d.), is too one-sided, although not without merit. Purely descriptive poetry is never satisfying for long ; it must be infused with personal feeling or experience. Mr. Milville's poems lack this.

It is a mistake to entitle anything "a collection of inspiring verse"—that should be left to the public. The entire format, including cover, of Harry Desmond's *Mary* (Stockwell, 2s. 6d.), is exceeding prejudicial to the contents ; it tempts any reviewer to damn it outright. However, when one's primary nausea is surmounted, it appears that, although Mr. Desmond goes to the other extreme from Mr. Milville, there is genuine feeling in some of these poems, and some are really delightful. Patience Strong has a large public. Mr. Desmond should appeal strongly also.

* * * *

So little use is made of half rhymes, which are so very effective if carefully chosen. They are rather a test of ear, and are apt to show up deficiencies in that respect, perhaps

that is why they are not more used. In a way their effect is that of a minor key, plaintive and rather slow, and yet subtly exciting. Combinations of sound like *lace* and *ice*, *line* and *lain*, *wound* and *wand* can often produce a most beautiful result. The other day I set myself an exercise : to produce half rhymes, using the vowel sounds a, e, i, o, in a poem of eight lines. Discipline is necessary for verse writers—not always, because sometimes the urge is too strong, but very often. More often than not the work gains afterwards as a result. Others might like to try their hand, so I will quote what I produced, "Mnemonic" :

Crushed in the grass the blue curls of self-heal
by those who seek the fallen gold of camomile,
the musk-sharp scent of seeded dwale
beyond the burrowings where conies hole.

The low green hiss of hellebore
pierces the dead-leaf runways, where
the little bead eyed shrew mice are,
rustling above the year's undying fire.

Jordans. MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

THE POETRY SOCIETY IN MICROCOSM.

KUNIGUNDE DUNCAN, of Wichita, Kansas, reports :—

Since May, 1938, the Poetry Centre here has met each Friday night for two hours in Library Hall of the City Library. Most evenings we spend informally, sitting about a long table. Each presents what original verse he has produced during the week. He reads it aloud, twice, without comment or explanation. No criticism is offered, but spontaneous applause—which, needless to say, is seldom earned. Next time round, each reports current or classic verse, critical article, comment on poetry or some technical explanation which, during his week of self-directed study, has seemed worth while to him. Often we invite university students and others in to give a programme for us. Or we spend the evening on some lately-published volume by an American. Sometimes we listen to the recorded reading of poetry from our small but growing record library. We have had Russians, Chinese, Afghans, Greeks and Indians read their poetry in the original to us. Our results have been gratifying. We have a fair knowledge of what is being written here and abroad ; besides the poetry already recognised in nineteen countries, comprising 600 poets. We have developed our taste and judgment and, though we pose merely as students of poetry, all of us are producing creditable verse.

The library's fine poetry collection is at our disposal, including classics, and complete American volumes, to date, newspaper anthologies and reputable collections. We read articles from THE POETRY REVIEW and discuss them. We have been most interested in your appraisal of Eliot. He surely was a menace over here, with his woe, awful pessimism, and jaded outlook. I think he had no little to do—he and his satellites—with the defeatist attitude which gripped Europe until recently and threatened to grip us too. A green persimmon, if ever there was one, is Elliot—a luscious looking native fruit that when bitten into puckers tongue, cheek and lips for almost an hour afterward. When it is old, frosted and shrivelled, it has a rather warmed-over good taste, but the six enormous seeds make it necessary to eat a handful to get a good bite.

My best regards to you and your staff who are the best fighting force the world has, the men who fight the spiritual fight.